NATION

Life jackets given at last minute, says survivor

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BUSINESS

Government cuts export duty on diesel and ATF

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SPORTS

CSK & MI face off in a battle for survival

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 2 MAY 2026 | SATURDAY | BENGALURU | 14 DHUL QADAH 1447 H | Vol 5 | Issue No 111 | Pages: 8

Record cocaine worth Rs 1,745 cr seized in Mumbai

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced on Friday that the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has dismantled a major international narcotics network, seizing 349kg of high-grade cocaine worth Rs 1,745 crore in Mumbai. Shah stated, "We are resolved to ruthlessly crush the narcotics cartel." The NCB's operation, named White Strike, uncovered a transnational trafficking syndicate after over six months of intelligence and surveillance.

The contraband was concealed inside machinery imported from abroad, hidden in nine layers of polythene with the seizure occurring after a driver's interrogation. "This seizure is significant because about 200-300kg cocaine is usually seized in India annually," said the NCB. In a two-stage operation, officers intercepted a vehicle in Navi Mumbai, recovering 136 packets of cocaine conceale. During interrogation, the accused revealed another consignment stored in Bhiwandi, leading to a second raid where 213 more packets were seized. *—PTI*

Commercial LPG price hiked by ₹993

Domestic LPG rate unchanged amid record hike; hoteliers warn of increase in food prices

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The price of commercial LPG was hiked by a record Rs 993 per 19-kg cylinder on Friday, marking the third straight monthly increase due to rising global energy prices linked to the West Asia conflict.

A 19-kg commercial LPG - used by establishments such as hotels and restaurants - now costs a record Rs 3,071.5 in Delhi as against Rs 2,078.50 previously. Rates were last increased by 195.50 per cylinder on 1 April. Prior to that, prices had gone up by Rs 114.5 per 19-kg cylinder on 1 March. In three increases, commercial LPG rates have gone up by Rs 1,303.

Prices of domestic cooking gas LPG - used in household kitchens – remains unchanged. Domestic LPG rates were last hiked by Rs 60 per 14.2-kg cylinder on 7 March. It costs Rs 913 per 14.2-kg cylinder in Delhi.

International crude oil prices this week climbed to a four-year high of USD 126 per barrel before cooling down slightly.

Government sources also said that an increase in petrol and diesel prices in the near future is not yet ruled out, as losses mount from a four-year-old freeze in retail rates despite the sharp rise in global crude oil prices.

19-kg commercial LPG costs a record Rs 3,071.5 *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

> **When a global supply chain faces disruption of 20 to 30 per cent on important routes and products, no country can be insulated from the shock. Sixty days into the disruption, India is standing strong. We have not revised retail petrol and diesel prices. We have not allowed panic to become policy**
>
> —Hardeep Singh Puri, Union Petrol Minister

Analysts had earlier flagged the possibility of price increases of Rs 25-28 per litre after the end of polling for assembly elections in West Bengal on 29 April.

Petrol is currently priced at Rs 94.77 a litre in Delhi, and diesel comes for Rs 87.67.

Industry owners said that the commercial LPG hike dealt a "severe blow" to the hospitality industry.

Pradeep Shetty, Spokesperson, Hotel And Restaurant Association (Western India) - HRAWI & Vice President, FHRAI (Federation of Hotels and Restaurants Association of India) said: "A 10 to 15 per cent hike in menu prices is imminent. But even that may not be enough to absorb the impact. Without immediate relief, the hospitality industry faces an existential crisis". *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 2, 3, 6, 7

EC orders repoll in 15 WB booths

KOLKATA, 1 MAY

The Election Commission on Friday ordered repoll in 15 polling stations falling under two Assembly constituencies in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal on 2 May, following reports of electoral malpractices.

The repolling have been ordered in 11 polling stations of Magrahat Paschim Assembly constituency and four in Diamond Harbour. The polling will take place between 7 am and 6 pm, the EC order said.

Polling in these two Assembly constituencies was held in the second phase of the state election on 29 April.

—PTI

The BJP had alleged rampant electoral malpractices in certain polling stations of both the seats under the Dimanod Harbour Lok Sabha constituency represented by TMC National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee. The EC had deputed its special observer, Subrata Gupta, to fact-check the allegations from the ground.

Separately, CM Mamata Banerjee and TMC National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee will hold a virtual meeting with all counting agents of the party on Saturday, .

Meanwhile, a two-judge special bench of the Supreme Court constituted for an urgent hearing will take up ruling TMC's petition on 2 May challenging the ECI's decision to appoint only Central government employees and PSU staff for supervising the counting of votes.

Kolkata police imposed prohibitory orders around all seven designated strong rooms. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

LESS THAN 50% FIR FILED

1,300 Mandya minors get pregnant in 5yrs

MANDYA, 1 MAY

In Mandya district —described as the 'sugar bowl' of Karnataka — there has been a steady rise in number of minor pregnancies with as many as 1,354 cases of pregnancies being reported among girls in the age group of 14 to 18 years over the last five years.

The statistics released by the Health Department has sent shockwaves across the State.

According to data from the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) portal, only 674 cases have been registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, so far. This indicates that over half of the cases have not led to the filing of FIRs, raising serious concerns about underreporting and gaps in legal enforcement.

Officials blame it all on multiple underlying causes, including child marriage, exploitative relationships, and instances of sexual abuse. Vulnerable minors continue to face systemic neglect and social pressures, they said.

Further compounding the issue, a recent raid by Lokayukta officials on two private diagnostic centres in KR Pet uncovered serious irregularities. Investigations revealed that 31 minor pregnant girls had undergone illegal scanning procedures at these facilities, suggesting the existence of an organised network engaged in unlawful medical practices.

All this has been happening despite Mandya being under the close monitoring and support of ASHA workers, according to social activists. *—Salar News*

— PTI

KSRTC bus tumbles in MM Hills, over 30 passengers injured

MYSURU, 1 MAY

As many as 30 passengers were injured when a KSRTC bus toppled at Talebetta in MM Hills, Hanur taluk, Chamarajanagar district, on Friday. The bus, heading to Mysuru, was carrying devotees returning from darshan at Lord Male Mahadeshwara temple. Police said the driver lost control, causing the accident. With the help of locals, the injured passengers, including the bus conductor Padmavathi, were taken to nearby hospitals such as Kowdalli Primary Health Centre, Hanur Health Centre, Kollegal Sub-Division Hospital, and some were rushed to KR Hospital in Mysuru. Locals flayed delays in ambulance services, blaming overspeeding by buses. They pointed to over four accidents on the stretch in the past week and sought action against drivers. —*SALAR NEWS*

Fishermen hospitalised after fight in Malpe

UDUPI, 1 MAY

A dispute over financial transactions escalated into violence between two groups of fishermen at Malpe harbour on Thursday evening, leaving several persons injured and triggering multiple police cases. According to preliminary reports, the clash began when Jayesh Kotian allegedly confronted and assaulted boat owner Chhota Harish in public over the repayment of a substantial outstanding amount. The confrontation soon turned into a physical altercation, with both men sustaining injuries. They were subsequently admitted to the government hospital at Ajjarkad in Udupi for treatment. The Malpe police have registered two separate cases in related to the incident involving fishermen and have initiated an investigation. —*SALAR NEWS*

Govt mulls setting up 'SM Krishna Study Chair'

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

Higher Education Minister MC Sudhakar has directed the Vice-Chancellor of University of Mysore to submit a formal proposal to establish a "SM Krishna Study Chair" for conducting in-depth research on the former Chief Minister, a release said. The request was made by Congress MLC Dinesh Gooligowda. Krishna was behind several reforms, including digitising land records, the 'Yashasvini' health insurance scheme for farmers, and the 'Akshara Dasoha' (midday meal) program for school children and is credited for transforming Bengaluru into India's IT-BT hub. The Study Chair aims to allow researchers to analyse Krishna's governance model. Notably, the decision was made on the former CM's birthday. Gooligowda said in a statement that the "entire world turned its attention toward Bengaluru" during Krishna's tenure as Karnataka Chief Minister.—*SALAR NEWS*

DKS turns grandpa on SM Krishna's birth anniversary

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar became a grandfather on Friday as his daughter Aishwarya Hegde delivered a girl in Bengaluru on Friday. Aishwarya delivered a girl at a private hospital on Cunningham Road. Shivakumar, who was in an official programme left midway to reach the hospital upon getting the news. The baby girl was born on the birth anniversary of former CM SM Krishna, who is her father-in-law. Shivakumar has often credited Krishna as his political mentor, making the coincidence deeply meaningful for him. —*SALAR NEWS*

2 committees to probe Bowring Hospital tragedy

DKS says 448 trees to be cleared to prevent accidents

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

The State government has constituted two committees to probe the collapse of a compound wall at the government-run Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital during heavy rains that claimed seven lives. Both committees will submit their reports within a week.

While one committee consisting of the Deputy Commissioner of Bengaluru Urban District and the Yelahanka Tahsildar will inquire into the incident locally, another five-member panel comprising PWD department officials has been constituted to conduct a technical inquiry, headed by Mohan K, retired Chief Engineer, PWD, the government order said.

The order said that the wall collapsed because it was not repaired on time.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the inquiry committees include verifying the year the structure was constructed and the materials used, and possible factors that might have led to the tragedy.

GBA has initiated measures to identify dangerous structures and trees across the City to prevent accidents and ease traffic congestion —*SALAR*

The committees also will look into whether the structure was maintained as per norms, if any other works taken up on the campus led to weakening the structure and whether the wall's lifecycle was over.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has initiated measures to identify dangerous structures and trees across the City to prevent accidents and ease traffic congestion. In addition to the deaths at the Bowring Hospital, three other people died in the rains on Wednesday and Thursday.

"They (police) have identified for the first phase 448 trees. The branches and not the trees, have to be cut. At some places where there are trees which have completely dried up will be cut," he said.

Shivakumar said the list has been prepared by the police department under the supervision of Joint Commissioner of Police Karthik Reddy. The Bengaluru Development Minister said he is giving the go-ahead and "cut the trees."

Meanwhile, GBA Chief Commissioner M Maheshwar Rao said that officials could have averted the widespread destruction had there been less rain.

"We are generally able to manage if our City gets around 70 mm of rain per hour. Beyond that it becomes difficult," he told reporters. The City saw a record 111mm of rain on Wednesday. He said the drain clearage work is ongoing and all the GBA's control rooms will be activated from May. —*Agencies*

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and BJP's Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya launch a double-decker flyover —*SALAR*

1st double-decker flyover opens

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

Bengaluru just got its first double-decker flyover connecting Ragigudda (Jayanagar/JP Nagar) to Central Silk Board and HSR Layout.

The 5.12km in the southern part of the City is now fully open in both directions, providing a signal-free commute between HSR and BTM Layout.

The project has a 4-lane road deck at 8m and a Yellow Line Metro above at 16m. This is touted to reduce travel time and ease Central Silk Board traffic.

SKYWALK PROJECT FOUNDATION LAID

The government also laid the foundation for the long-pending Banashankari Skywalk project.

Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya noted that it comes after nearly seven years of sustained follow-up and consistent citizen demand.

The skywalk will connect the Banashankari Metro Station, BMTC Bus Stand, and TTMC, and is expected to improve pedestrian safety for over 50,000 daily commuters.

The project was first initiated in November 2019. By January 2022, BMRCL had formally proposed a circular skywalk design, 280 metres long and 6 metres wide.

In August 2022, MP Surya formally recommended that the project be taken up immediately.

But administrative progress stalled. On 1 November, 2023, Surya wrote to Deputy CM DK Shivakumar requesting immediate fund sanction. Tenders were finally called by BMRCL in April 2025. —*Agencies*

Mekedatu project needs 5.3k acres of land

Shivakumar said that the Detailed Project Report for the Mekedatu Reservoir Project on the Cauvery is ready and will be submitted soon. "We have revised the cost estimates once again. We need to provide around 5,300 acres of land to the Forest Department. This will also be discussed with the Revenue Department," he said.

B'luru sets record with 23L+ E-Khathas

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said that that the issue of over 23 lakh e-khatas so far under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) was a national record.

Addressing a press conference at Vidhana Soudha, he said, "Open House counters for e-khatas would be set up at 50 locations in all the five corporations and 'Namma e-khata' campaign is scheduled to be held from 16 May.

"This campaign will be conducted in government or private schools. Approximately 5,000 grievances will be resolved every week. Five to 10 counters will be opened in each municipal corporation," he said.

"In cases of document disputes or doubts, revenue officers will visit the site for inspection and resolve the matter within 15 days of application submission," he added.

"Khatas for apartments with possession certificates would be done automatically. Issuing over 23 lakh e-khatas online in 10 months is a record in the entire country.

Occupancy Certificates (OC) have been issued to 37,480 flats," he said.

"A campaign to convert B khatas to A khatas will be launched. Since there is a possibility of lower-level officers misusing the process, khatas will be delivered directly to people's doorsteps," he said. When asked about compensation land in Bidadi Township, he said: "Kumaraswamy had promised 8,000 sq ft. I am giving 9,400 sq ft. It's like hitting a lottery for the landowners of Bidadi.

"Most farmers don't want cash — they want to retain the property. A new modern city will soon rise in South Bengaluru. Don't go selling your land," Shivakumar advised. —*Agencies*

LPG hike: Cruel irony on May Day

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said the Centre hiked commercial LPG cylinder prices immediately after Assembly elections, calling it "organised looting", and "cruel irony on Labour Day".

"As we warned all along, the moment Assembly elections got over, the Narendra Modi government has hiked prices again. The price of commercial LPG cylinders has been increased by Rs 993 on 1 May, taking the cost to Rs 3,071.50 per cylinder - after deliberately holding back such increases during the election period," Siddaramaiah stated on X.

"In just four months, the Modi government has increased commercial LPG cylinder prices six times, pushing the total burden up by Rs 1,518.... Every time global conditions change, instead of protecting Indian citizens, Modi simply passes the burden on to them," he stated.

> **The urban working class, daily wage earners, and small business owners will suffer the most. From a cup of tea to a simple meal, everything will become costlier**
>
> -Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

> **I do not understand public opinion. Why do people still justify such policies or ideology that have brought the country into such a difficult situation?**
>
> -Mallikarjun Kharge, AICC President

Siddaramaiah said the hike would affect households, as hotels, restaurants and catering services would be forced to raise prices

Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda said the LPG hike has disrupted livelihoods across sectors. "Many hotels are shutting down. Lakhs of auto drivers who run gas-powered autos are losing their daily income".

Even small vendors, those running tiny idli stalls, are also being affected, he told reporters here.

According to hoteliers, the price of commercial LPG in Bengaluru has risen from Rs 2,031 to Rs 3,153 following the latest hike. —*Agencies*

Workers and members of various trade unions dressed in red take part in a rally on International Workers' Day aka May Day at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Friday —*SALAR*

H5N1 confirmed in peacock deaths in Tumakuru

TUMAKURU, 1 MAY

Lab reports have confirmed that the recent deaths of 44 peacocks in the district were caused by the H5N1 bird flu virus, officials announced on Friday. The incident was first reported on 16 April, with over the course of a week, 44 peacocks found dead under mysterious circumstances in Tumakuru taluk, they said.

The deaths were reported from farm fields in Kesaramadu, Hirehalli, and Gulur gram panchayats during an extensive combing operation, forest officials added. Samples collected from the carcasses were sent to the ICAR–National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases in Bhopal, which confirmed H5N1 as the cause. No new deaths have been reported since 23 April, officials noted.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Kumar Pushkar told PTI, "Lab reports have confirmed the deaths were due to H5N1.

"The forest department is working in coordination with the Health and Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services departments to ensure the infection is contained."

A 10km containment zone has been declared, and all poultry farms within the zone have been alerted and sensitised. —*PTI*

BUDDHA PURNIMA

On the occasion of the Buddha Poornima (Buddha's birth anniversary) on Monday, Buddhist monks pray at Mahabodhi Society in Bengaluru on Friday —*SALAR*

KERALAM NURSING STUDENT DIES BY SUICIDE, PARENTS SUSPECT FOUL PLAY

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

A 19-year-old student from Kerala, studying at a private nursing college in Bommasandra in the City, allegedly died by suicide in his hostel room, police confirmed on Friday. The deceased, Adhityan PA, a second-year nursing student, was found hanging from a ceiling fan on 29 April. He left behind a suicide note stating that no one was responsible for his death. Police indicated that initial investigations suggest he may have been suffering from depression, though other issues are being examined.

Adhityan's father, Pradeep S, claimed that a college representative informed him upon his arrival that his son had died under suspicious circumstances, suggesting a case of suicide. However, he expressed strong doubts, stating, "I firmly believe that my son would not have taken such a step. He was of good character and mentally strong. Therefore, I suspect foul play."

He urged police to conduct a thorough investigation, and a case of unnatural death has been registered at Hebbagudi Police Station. Further inquiries are ongoing as authorities examine all allegations. —*PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

B'luru techie arrested for filming woman bathing

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

A man has been arrested for allegedly filming a 23-year-old software engineer while she was showering at her rental home here, police said on Friday.

The accused, identified as Karthik, is around 30 years old, married, and an MBA graduate from Tamil Nadu. He was working at a private firm in Bengaluru, they said.

The incident transpired on Wednesday in the Mahadevapura area.

The woman stated in her complaint that she noticed an unknown person secretly recording a video on a mobile phone from a neighbouring building while she was bathing in her bathroom.

Shocked, she raised an alarm, after which the accused fled the spot.

The woman was under severe distress and feared that the footage might be circulated online, affecting her privacy and dignity, police said.

A case was registered at the Mahadevapura police station, police added. Using technical surveillance, they were able to identify and arrest the accused before any such circulation could occur, a senior police officer said. —*PTI*

K'TAKA GOVT LAUNCHES NATIONS FIRST SPACE TECH CENTRE IN B'LURU

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

In a boost to India's rapidly expanding space economy, the Karnataka government on Friday launched the country's first Centre of Excellence for Space Technology (CoE SpaceTech) here.

The initiative is aimed at translating space innovation capabilities into commercial outcomes, officials said.

The Centre has been set up through the Karnataka Innovation and Technology Society in collaboration with SIA -India. It was inaugurated by the state Minister for Electronics, IT/BT, and Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Priyank Kharge, in the presence of senior officials and industry leaders.

Speaking on this occasion, Kharge said that Karnataka has consistently been at the forefront of India's technology and innovation journey.

"With the launch of this centre, we are extending that leadership into one of the most strategic sectors of the future," he stated. —*PTI*

30 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Ravi K assumes charge as HAL Chair

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

State-run aerospace major Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) on Friday said **Ravi K** has assumed charge as the 22nd Chairman and Managing Director (CMD).

Ravi succeeds DK Sunilon 30 April. He brings with him over 30 years of experience across various sectors such as A&D, manufacturing and electronics, HAL said in a release.

Prior, Ravi served as the Director (Operations) at HAL, where he led strategic planning to secure HAL's Maharatna status.

"My vision is to transform HAL into a globally competitive aerospace and defence enterprise, driven by innovation, AI, excellence, and people," Ravi said.

During his tenure, he concluded the contract to supply 180 LCA Tejas to the Indian Air Force, 156 LCH Prachand to the Indian Army and Indian Air Force and is credited with the operationalisation of the LCA Tejas fleet in IAF.

He boosted fleet serviceability through various customer-centric initiatives, established seamless data communication with IAF bases.

A Mechanical Engineering graduate from Malnad College of Engineering, Karnataka, Ravi is an alumnus of IIM Ahmedabad and IAS, Toulouse, France. He has been a driving force in strengthening indigenous capabilities within the LCA Tejas programme by increasing local content and expanding production capacity in Nasik, the company further said. —*PTI*

— PTI

Settled Indo-Pak war via tariff threats: Trump

WASHINGTON, 1 MAY

US President Donald Trump reiterated his claim on Thursday that he used tariff threats to resolve the 2025 conflict between India and Pakistan. Speaking with reporters at an executive order signing event, Trump stated he threatened to impose "200 per cent tariffs" on the "two nuclear-armed neighbours" as a deterrent against fighting. "They sent letters thanking me and to the Nobel Committee. The Pakistan Prime Minister said, I saved 30 to 50 million lives. But it could have been more...." he said. Since 10 May 2025, when he announced the India-Pakistan ceasefire on social media, Trump has claimed credit for ending the hostilities over 80 times. Trump again claimed to have ended eight wars. —*ANI*

HC bins FIR against RaGa for 'fighting Indian State' barb

PRAYAGRAJ, 1 MAY

Allahabad High Court dismissed a petition on Friday seeking registration of an FIR against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for an alleged controversial remark made in 2025. The dismissed petition was filed by Simran Gupta of the right-wing organisation Hindu Shakti Dal. The HC petition follows a local Sambhal court's rejection of Gupta's plea to register an FIR. The petitioner had alleged that Gandhi had said, "We are now fighting the BJP, the RSS, and the Indian State itself," during the inauguration of the All India Congress Committee office in 2025. The petitioner said the remark made by the Congress leader hurt public sentiments and amounted to a seditious and anti-national statement allegedly intended to destabilise the country.—*PTI*

ED quizzes WB Minister Sujit Bose in job scam case

KOLKATA, 1 MAY

West Bengal's Fire Services Minister Sujit Bose appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for questioning on Friday over his role in the alleged civic body recruitment scam. The Calcutta High Court ordered Sujit Bose to appear before the ED by 10.30am on Friday. Bose had skipped three prior summonses, citing election campaign commitments and filing a High Court petition alleging harassment. Bose is seeking re-election from the Bidhannagar seat. The summons follows the ED finding incriminating documents while searching establishments owned by Bose and his son at South Dum Dum Municipality. Bose has denied the charges. —*PTI*

Miscreants set fire to TVK campaign office

TIRUCHIRAPALLI, 1 MAY

A campaign office of the actor Vijay-led TVK was allegedly torched by unidentified miscreants in Kama-nayakkanpalayam village near Srirangam on Friday. Fire engulfed the thatched roof providing shade at the entrance of the building that served as the party's election office for the Srirangam constituency. The incident comes against the backdrop of the 23 April Assembly elections. While on social media, a CCTV footage of two unidentified men fleeing on motorbike is being cir-culated as the culprits, police said the video footage is yet to be verified. Based on a complaint lodged by TVK, the Pettaivaithalai Police have registered a case and initiated a search for the perpetrators.—*PTI*

EC denies 'malpractice' at WB strongrooms

Police clamps prohibitory orders on gatherings outside 7 strongrooms in Kolkata

KOLKATA, 1 MAY

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Manoj Agarwal on Friday asserted there is no scope for wrongdoing at the counting centres after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee alleged possibilities of malpractices.

Following tensions around two counting centres in Kolkata, police clamped prohibitory orders on gatherings outside all seven strongrooms in the city.

Stating that round-the-clock CCTV monitoring of strongrooms was in place, Agarwal dismissed the allegations as "baseless".

TMC spokesperson and Beleghata constituency candidate Kunal Ghosh said that party workers and poll aspirants were keeping a strict vigil at the counting centres, where the EVMs are stored in strongrooms.

Banerjee herself landed up at the Sakhawat Memorial School counting centre in Bhabanipur constituency on 30 April and stayed put there for about four hours. She emerged from the premises past midnight and warned against any attempts to tamper with the counting process, demanding greater transparency.

CM Mamata Banerjee after spending nearly 4 hours at a strongroom on Thursday; BJP's Suvendu Adhikari visits a strongroom on Friday—*PTI*

Meanwhile, BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari took a dig at Baneerjee, terming for her late-night visit to the counting centre as "drama."

TMC leaders and candidates Sashi Panja and Kunal Ghosh held a sit-in outside the Khudiram Anushilan Kendra counting centre in Kolkata on 30 April, alleging unauthorised activities inside the strongroom.

A large number of supporters from both TMC and BJP camps gathered outside the venue, shouting slogans till they were dispersed by security forces.

The EC said poll officials were engaged in the task of segregating postal ballots and political parties for the segregation activity were notified.

Prohibitory orders were also clamped around the Hastings House complex, APC Polytechnic College, St. Thomas Boys' High School, Ballygunge Government High School and the David Hare Training College counting premises. —*PTI*

Commuters trying to board the few buses that plied the roads in Kolkata on Friday —*PTI*

People suffer as buses go off roads

KOLKATA, 1 MAY

Daily commuters in Kolkata and adjoining areas continued to face severe hardship on Friday due to a shortage of buses, with a large number of vehicles still engaged in poll duty and unlikely to return before counting on 4 May.

Acknowledging the situation, Joint Council of Bus Syndicate secretary Tapan Banerjee said more than 90 per cent of around 3,600 private buses requisitioned for the West Bengal polls have yet to report for duty.

Most of the buses are yet to be released after polling as they continue to be deployed for post-election duties, including the movement of security personnel and officials, and are expected to remain unavailable till the counting process scheduled for May 4, Banerjee told PTI.

The shortage has led to overcrowding in available modes of transport, especially the Metro Railways' Blue Line and Green Lines.

The disruption has been particularly acute on routes heavily dependent on private buses like the EM Bypass stretch from Garia Station to Ultadanga and along VIP Road, BT Road, Jessore Road and GT Road stretches, he said adding that services were unlikely to normalise before the counting date. —*PTI*

Post-poll violence rocks 3 districts

KOLKATA, 1 MAY

At least three incidents of alleged post-poll violence were reported from West Bengal's Murshidabad, Malda and North 24 Parganas districts, police said on Friday.

In Murshidabad district, a CPI(M) polling agent, identified as Ruhul Amin, was allegedly attacked on Thursday night at Lochanpur within Islampur police station limits.

According to party sources, Amin was assaulted at a tea stall by a group of local leaders allegedly led by a TMC regional functionary.

The CPI(M) claimed that police did not act initially, despite lodging a complaint.

In another incident in Malda district, a BJP mandal president, Mahananda Mondal, was allegedly attacked by suspected TMC workers on Thursday afternoon.

The incident took place in the North Balupur area of Ratua. Mondal was stopped on the road and assaulted with bricks. He was later admitted to the Malda Medical College for treatment, BJP leader Khagen Murmu said. —*PTI*

WB sees 91.28% 3rd gender turnout

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

According to the Election Commission (EC), West Bengal recorded a 91.28 per cent turnout among third-gender voters in the second phase of its assembly polls. This represents an increase from the 56.79 per cent turnout in phase I.

Puducherry, however, recorded the highest turnout among third-gender electors at 91.81 per cent. Meanwhile, 60.49 per cent of Tamil Nadu's 7,728 registered third-gender voters cast their ballots. Assam recorded a 36.84 per cent turnout among its 343 third gender electors, while Kerala saw 57.04 per cent of its 277 electors exercise their franchise.

A total of 48,194 people registered as third-gender electors in 2024, a 23.5 per cent increase from 2019. However, only 27 per cent of these registered electors voted in the Assembly polls.

Former chief election commissioner Navin Chawla pushed for third gender persons to register themselves as voters in 'Others' or 'O' category, which is now the norm as EC identifies voters as 'male', 'female' and 'others' or third gender. —*PTI*

> **Today, stealing of votes is not happening through EVMs, but via the SIR unfortunately through the Election Commission. If the SIR successfully influences the election outcome in West Bengal, it would set a very dangerous precedent for all political parties. It is a huge challenge for the Opposition as this method of stealing votes involved the deletion of names from voter lists**
>
> – Omar Abdullah, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister

SC gives anticipatory bail to Khera

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The Supreme Court has granted anticipatory bail to Congress leader **Pawan Khera** in a case related to making allegations against Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife, saying the matter appears to have stemmed from political rivalry.

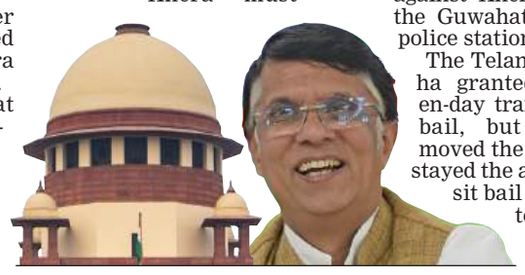
The court, in its order uploaded on 30 April, granted the pre-arrest bail to Khera subject to certain conditions.

Khera has alleged that Sarma's wife possessed multiple passports and undisclosed properties abroad.

The top court said a careful balance must be struck between the state's interest in ensuring a fair investigation and the individual's fundamental right to personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.

It directed Khera to cooperate in the investigation and to appear before the police station as and when required and not tamper with any of the evidence during the investigation or trial period.

Khera must also not leave India without prior leave of the competent court and said if the trial court deems it fit to impose some other conditions, it has the discretion to do the needful and put those conditions during trial



Following the allegations, the CM's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, filed criminal cases against Khera and others at the Guwahati Crime Branch police station.

The Telangana High Court ha granted Khera a seven-day transit anticipatory bail, but Assam Police moved the SC against it. SC stayed the anticipatory transit bail and asked Khera to approach the Gauhati High Court. —*PTI*

'Election Bill': Rahul slams commercial LPG price hike

NEW DELHI/ KOTTAYAM, 1 MAY

The recent steep increase in commercial LPG cylinder prices, with a record Rs 993 hike to Rs 3,071.50 in Delhi, has sparked criticism across political parties, with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi labelling the move as an "election bill."

He warned that the next "strike" would target petrol and diesel, and accused the government of profiteering from low global crude prices and passing costs onto consumers after the elections.

He stated that since February, the price had risen by Rs 1,380 — an 81 per cent increase in three months — impacting small businesses and households.

Congress general secretary KC Venugopal criticised the timing, saying, "Just as the election cycle concluded, the Modi government wasted no time to increase prices of LPG cylinders," and warned it could lead to protests.

CPI(M) leader MV Govindan condemned the hike, asserting it showed the government's failure to shield India from the West Asia conflict's effects. He alleged that such policies benefit industrial monopolists and predicted protests across the country. —*PTI*

NAVY GETS INDIGENOUS STEALTH FRIGATE 'MAHENDRAGIRI'

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The Indian Navy has received its sixth Nilgiri-class (Project 17A) stealth frigate, Mahendragiri, equipped with advanced weapon systems and sensors.

Delivered on April 30 at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDSL), Mumbai, Mahendragiri marks a significant milestone in India's push for self-reliance in warship construction.

The Defence Ministry described Project 17A frigates as versatile, multi-mission platforms designed to meet current and emerging maritime challenges. The frigate reflects a leap in naval design, stealth, firepower, automation, and survivability, symbolising Aatmanirbharta.

Designed by the Warship Design Bureau and overseen by the Warship Overseeing Team, Mahendragiri is the fourth of its class built at MDSL.

The new stealth frigate features advanced weaponry, anti-surface, anti-air, and anti-submarine warfare systems, with CODOG propulsion and integrated platform management. —*PTI*

'RUDE PEOPLE' BARB

Bangladesh summons Indian envoy over Himanta's remarks

DHAKA, 1 MAY

The Bangladesh government has summoned the acting Indian High Commissioner, Pawan Badhe, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to lodge a formal protest concerning recent comments allegedly made by Assam Chief Minister **Himanta Biswa Sarma**, the Dhaka Tribune reported.

The diplomatic move followed remarks related to the repatriation of individuals from Assam.

The Indian envoy was summoned on Thursday afternoon, with Bangladeshi officials conveying their concerns. Dhaka expressed its worries over recent public discourse, emphasising the need to avoid comments that could harm bilateral relations.

Sarma had made a statement on 26 April, claiming that 20 foreign nationals were apprehended in Assam and "pushed back to Bangladesh."

On social media platform X, he remarked, "Rude people don't understand soft language. We continuously remind ourselves of this prophetic line when we expel infiltrators from Assam who don't leave themselves. For instance, these 20 illegal Bangladeshis who were PUSHED BACK last night."

Bangladesh deemed such statements "counterproductive" and warned they could strain the bilateral relationship. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed the importance of exercising restraint when addressing sensitive issues to preserve cooperation. —*ANI*

Cong seeks dope test of Punjab CM

CHANDIGARH, 1 MAY

Congress leader Partap Singh Bajwa on Friday wrote to Punjab Assembly Speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan seeking alcometer and dope testing of Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and all the legislators.

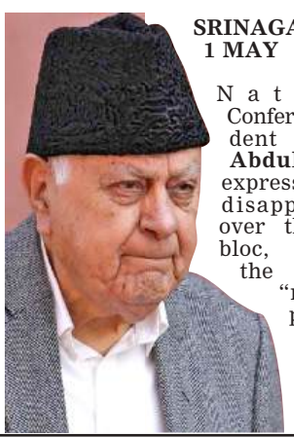
However, Speaker Sandhwan later rejected the demand of the Congress MLAs.

Bajwa referred to an incident that occurred during the ongoing special session of the Assembly, as raised by Congress MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira. Mann had left the House without replying to allegations made by Khaira.

The Congress Legislative Party would not join the proceedings of the House "unless the Chief Minister clears himself of these allegations. —*PTI*

FAROOQ LASHES OUT

'J&K statehood lacks INDIA block's support'



SRINAGAR, 1 MAY

National Conference president **Farooq Abdullah** has expressed deep disappointment over the INDIA bloc, especially the Congress, "not supporting" the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood with the "expected vigour".

Abdullah said that while his party remains a committed member of the alliance, it has fallen short of its potential.

He also flagged the lack of a robust, unified approach to Jammu and Kashmir's issues as a primary point of contention within the bloc.

He further urged the alliance to move beyond being a mere electoral pact, calling for more frequent meetings to address the "ignored" future of the nation

The three-time Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister also regretted that the Opposition has failed to project a leader "who could meet the challenges" posed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He advised opposition leaders to have a far more robust approach to the general public, adding that today the country don't have Gandhi, Nehru or Indira.

Abdullah expressed hope that the Centre will take a decision on the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir after the Assembly elections in various states are over.

Abdullah indicated if things did not materialise, his party may approach the Supreme Court.

SC had directed that statehood be restored "at the earliest".

He said the National Conference shares a good relation with the Centre, which has given a package for development of rural road in the state. —*PTI*

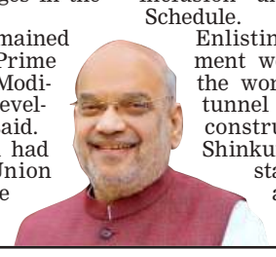
Ladakh recorded rapid growth since 2019 : Shah

LEH/JAMMU, 1 MAY

Union Home Minister **Amit Shah** on Friday said Ladakh was a model of rapid transformation since the 2019 bifurcation of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, and listed sweeping political, social and economic changes in the Union territory.

The region has remained at the centre of Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's development agenda, he said.

Shah said Ladakh had long demanded Union territory status due to lack of development and asserted that the decision had brought visible change across sectors.



His remarks came amid renewed calls by the Leh Apex Body and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) for resumption of talks with the Centre on statehood and inclusion under the Sixth Schedule.

Enlisting the development works, Shah said the work on the Zojila tunnel is in progress, construction of the Shinkun La tunnel has started and a civil airport is coming up. —*PTI*

— PTI

Manipur's Bailey bridge collapses, supply route cut

CHURACHANDPUR, 1 MAY

A Bailey bridge over the Tuivai river in Manipur's Churachandpur district collapsed on Thursday evening, officials confirmed. The bridge, located between Sinzawl and Khuanggin villages along NH-102B, gave way while two trucks loaded with cement were crossing. No casualties were reported. The route is a vital supply line for Churachandpur, facilitating movement from Silchar in Assam and other areas via Mizoram. Authorities said recovery work is progressing urgently to restore connectivity. The collapse has temporarily hindered essential supplies, but efforts are underway to repair the bridge and reopen the route soon, said officials. —*PTI*

1 killed, mahout injured in Keralam elephant attack

KOCHI, 1 MAY

A captive elephant at Kidangoor in Angamaly became violent on Friday, killing one and attacking and injuring several people, police said. Visuals showed the elephant attacking parked vehicles, damaging a car and two-wheelers. An elephant squad from the Forest Department tried to control the animal before it moved out of the temple premises. Angamali police reported that a lorry driver was killed, and the main mahout was seriously injured. Around noon, the elephant was tranquilised by a veterinarian allowing the Forest Department to restrain it. A person linked to the elephant said it was earlier calm and had participated in Thrissur Pooram, suggesting something triggered its aggression. —*PTI*

— PTI

Two jailed for hoisting Khalistani flag in Punjab

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

A special NIA court sentenced Inderjeet Singh and Jaspal Singh from Moga to five years and six months in prison, with a fine of Rs 16,000 each, for hoisting a Khalistani flag at a government building. The incident occurred on 14 August 2020, a day before Independence Day, at the deputy commissioner's office in Moga. Acting on Gurpatwant Singh Pannun's instigation, the duo climbed atop the building, hoisted a saffron-yellow flag with 'KHALISTAN', and insulted the Indian flag by cutting its rope. Pannun, a designated terrorist, had uploaded a video urging hoisting Khalistani flags and offered a USD 1,25,000 reward for doing so at the New Delhi Red Fort. —*PTI*

Ambedkar's statue vandalised in UP, cases booked

SHAHJAHANPUR, 1 MAY

Police registered an FIR after unidentified persons vandalised a statue of BR Ambedkar in Katia Usmanpur village. The incident happened Thursday night, when the statue's hand was broken, villagers reported on Friday morning. The police said a local resident, who previously opposed Ambedkar Jayanti celebrations, was named in the FIR. The statue has been repaired with villagers' help, and police have deployed personnel in the area as a precaution. An investigation is ongoing under Section 298 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, said authorities, to identify those responsible for the act. —*PTI*

Life jackets given at last minute, says survivor

Bargi Dam boat driver ignored pleas to steer to safety

JABALPUR, 1 MAY

Rescue teams from the NDRF and other agencies trying on Friday to recover the boat which overturned in the Bargi Dam due to a storm—*PTI*

An unplanned excursion to Madhya Pradesh's Bargi Dam turned into a nightmare for Delhi-resident Sangeeta Kori, who watched her family disappear into the reservoir after their cruise boat capsized amid a sudden storm and a chaotic, last-minute scramble for life jackets.

Kori, who was among the 16 rescued, claimed that the vessel was carrying nearly 40 people, including children without tickets.

Officials said the cruise boat overturned in the Jabalpur reservoir after encountering a sudden storm on Thursday.

"Six of us had come from Delhi to visit Jabalpur. Around 4 pm, we decided to go to Bargi Dam. Around 6 pm, the cruise was returning when the winds became strong, and water started entering the boat," Kori said with tears in her eyes. She said lack of planning and negligence led to the tragedy.

"None of the passengers had life jackets. They were just kept somewhere inside. When the water started filling, they tried to distribute them, but it led to panic. Within moments, the boat tipped over," she said.

Kori, who managed to survive by grabbing a jacket, alleged that the operator's greed had outweighed passenger safety.

Three members of the family managed to get out, while one died and two are missing, she said.

"Locals were shouting from the bank to steer the boat to safety, but he didn't listen. He seemed inexperienced," she said, adding that the tragedy could have been averted if the boat had been diverted in time.

TOLL NOW 9

The death toll in the Bargi Dam cruise boat tragedy rose to nine on Friday as rescuers recovered five more bodies from the submerged vessel, while search continues for six others still missing in the reservoir, officials said. — *PTI*

Divers found body of woman clutching child

In a heart-wrenching discovery, a paramilitary team found the body of a woman who was aboard the cruise boat which capsized in Bargi Dam still clutching her child in a final, tight embrace.

The diving team described the conditions inside the submerged vessel, where limited space and jagged iron rods forced rescuers to use hammers to create narrow openings, with one diver almost getting trapped. "We faced problems retrieving the body of a woman. We then found that she was holding her child tightly, and it was difficult to separate them. Our team was deeply moved by the scene," one of the divers said. —*PTI*

Mohammad Salim Dola, centre, an aide of gangster Dawood Ibrahim and a drug trafficker, with Narcotics Control Bureau officials —*PTI*

Drug trafficker Dola lived in Turkiye on Bulgarian passport

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Mohammad Salim Dola, the absconding international drug trafficker brought to India from Turkiye recently, was living in that country on a Bulgarian passport under the false name of 'Hamza', officials said on Friday.

On Thursday, a court in Mumbai sent Dola, 59, to the custody of the Narcotics Control Bureau till 8 May.

Officials said the probe found Dola was staying in Turkiye on a Bulgarian passport under the name 'Hamza.' It is being ascertained if his Bulgarian passport was valid or fake, they said.

The NCB told the court that Dola's name emerged as an international drug trafficker associated with Dawood Ibrahim, and that he has been identified as the key supplier of a commercial quantity of mephedrone drug seized from south Mumbai in June 2023.

Mohammad Salim Dola was arrested in Turkiye on the basis of an Interpol Red Notice issued as per India's request in March 2024. He was wanted in several narcotics trafficking cases in India and had been absconding. He was brought to New Delhi from Turkiye on Tuesday. — *PTI*

MUMBAI-PUNE 'MISSING LINK' CUTS DOWN TRAVEL TIME

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis inaugurated the Mumbai-Pune Expressway 'Missing Link' project on Friday. This bypasses the steep ghat section and reduces the journey time between the two cities. It is expected to open to the public on Saturday.

Cost: ₹ 6,700 crore

Length: 13.3-km

Travel time: Cuts journey time by 20-30 minutes

Connects Khopoli (in Mumbai) to Kusgaon (near Lonavala in Pune)

Distance: It reduces distance by 6km. Earlier it was 19.8km via the ghat

The 650m viaduct is described as India's tallest road cable-stayed bridge. Supported by 240 stay cables, it towers over the scenic Tiger Valley.

- **Developer:** The Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation
- The project has two tunnels, two viaducts and a cable-stayed bridge.
- The tunnels are among the world's widest at 23.5m, an application for which has been submitted for a Guinness World Record. One tunnel is 1.58km long, another tunnel is 8.86km.
- The link bypasses the accident-prone Bhor Ghat section.
- Initially, only light motor vehicles and buses will be allowed on the new stretch; heavy goods vehicles will continue to use the old ghat route.
- No toll hike has been proposed yet.

SC clears BJP's Anurag and Parvesh in hate speech case

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The SC said that no cognisable offence was made out against BJP leaders Anurag Thakur and Parvesh Verma for their alleged hate speeches during the anti-CAA protest in Delhi in 2020. While BJP MP Thakur is a former union minister, Verma is a minister in the Delhi government.

In its 29 April verdict regarding hate speeches, Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta also dealt with the petition filed by CPI(M) leaders Brinda Karat and KM Tiwari who had challenged a June 2022 verdict of the Delhi HC.

The high court had dismissed a petition by Karat and Tiwari challenging the trial court's refusal to directly registration an FIR against Thakur and Verma for their alleged hate speeches over the anti-CAA protest at Delhi's Shaheen Bagh.

Parvesh Verma —*PTI*

Anurag Thakur—*PTI*

The SC noted that the HC had held that the speeches do not indicate any cognisable offence, and also observed that the statements were not directed against any community. d give sh The CPI(M) leaders had claimed that on 27 January 2020, Thakur allegedly made a hate speech at a rally in Rithala. They had claimed that on 28 January 2020, Verma allegedly made inflammatory hate speeches.

A trial court on 26 August 2020, dismissed the petitioners' complaint on the ground that it was not sustainable as sanction from the competent authority was not obtained.

The SC observed that the HC had declined to directly registr an FIR as sanction under Sections 196 and 197 of the CrPC had not been obtained.

"To hold otherwise would amount to introducing a restriction not envisaged by the legislature," the SC said, adding, "The requirement of sanction is, therefore, a condition only for taking cognisance and not for the registration of an FIR." — *PTI*

Terror financing, crypto frauds are ED's new focus areas

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Crypto currency frauds, terror financing, cyber-enabled crimes and narcotics trafficking are the new focus areas for the Enforcement Directorate, Director Rahul Navin said on Friday.

Speaking during the 70th 'ED Day' held here, he noted that bank and real estate frauds have declined due to the implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code Act and Real Estate (Regulation and Development Act (RERA).

During 2025-26, the ED filed 812 chargesheets and 155 supplementary chargesheets which is nearly twice the last fiscal, he said.

He added that the conviction rate of the agency was 94 per cent.

The director said 2,400 money laundering cases were pending trial in courts and expressed optimism that "most" of these will result in conviction.

Navin said the agency has redistributed assets worth Rs 63,142 crore to fraud victims, including homebuyers, investors and banks.

The Enforcement Department was established by the Centre on 1 May 1956.

It now implements two criminal laws, The Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act (FEOA), apart from the civil provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). — *PTI*

More heatwave days likely in some areas in May, warns IMD

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Above-normal heatwave days are likely in some areas on the foothills of the Himalayas, east coast states, Gujarat and Maharashtra in May, the India Metreological Department (IMD) said on Friday.

In a statement, Director General of Meteorology, IMD, Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, said, "During May 2026, minimum temperatures are expected to be above normal in many areas of the country."

"However, many areas of northwest India, along with some parts of central India and adjoining areas of peninsular India and southern parts of northeast India, are likely to experience normal to below-normal minimum temperatures," he said.

The IMD also said that rainfall in May is most likely to be above normal over India, barring some areas in the east, northeast and east central India.

The IMD said that in May rainfall is likely to be above normal —*PTI*

2 DEAD IN TRIPURA

Two persons, including a child, died and four others were injured in storm-related incidents in Tripura in the last 48 hours, an official said on Friday.

The storms also caused extensive damage to crops and power transmission lines across the state.

"A five-year-old child died and his brother was injured when their mud house at Radhanagar in Unakoti district collapsed on Thursday. Another man from Longtarai Valley in Dhalai district died after being struck by lightning on Wednesday," State Project Director (Disaster Management) Sanat Kumar Das said. He said three more persons were injured in various parts of the state due to storm-related incidents.

"During heavy rainfall and gusty winds, 3,997 houses were damaged, of which 180 huts were destroyed," he said, adding that Rs 79.59 lakh has been released so far as interim relief. — *PTI*

Keralam snakebite toll up as man dies in hospital

KOLLAM, 1 MAY

The snakebite death toll in Keralam has increased after a 64-year-old man, Rajendran, died in hospital following treatment. He was bitten by a Russell's viper last week at his daughter's house in Arinalloor, Kollam district. The partially blind man was bitten outside his home when he stepped out after dinner.

His relatives killed the viper and rushed him to a nearby hospital, where anti-venom was given. His condition worsened, leading to his transfer to Thiruvananthapuram Medical College Hospital, where he died on Friday morning. Police have begun an investigation, and the body will be handed over after autopsy. the last two weeks many snakebite deaths, including that of three children, have been reported from Keralam.

Experts advise caution as snakes come near homes due to the summer heat — *PTI*

COTTAGE CHEESE OR SUBSTITUTE?

M'rashtra eateries must declare 'fake paneer'

MUMBAI, 1 MAY

Restaurants in Maharashtra are now required to clearly inform customers whether the "paneer" served in dishes is genuine cottage cheese or a substitute, officials said on Friday.

The state Food and Drug Administration's 20 March directive, which came into effect on Thursday, was issued to ensure transparency and prevent consumers from being misled by the use of cheaper non-dairy alternatives instead of paneer.

As per the directive, all food businesses, including restaurants, hotels, caterers and fast-food outlets, must explicitly disclose the use of substitutes, commonly known as cheese analogues, on their menus, bills and display boards, an official said. Manufacturers have also been directed to label such products accurately, he said, adding that action will be taken against violators under food safety laws.

Paneer is a product made entirely from milk, while a cheese analogue is prepared using edible oils, starch and emulsifiers. Although these are not unsafe, officials said consumers must be informed what is being served to them.

The move follows complaints that several establishments were serving paneer-based dishes made with substitutes without informing customers.

Backing the move, the Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) said that its leadership has engaged with the regulator and is committed to complying with the new rule. — *PTI*

Delhi labourers to get clinics, have mass weddings

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced welfare plans for labourers, including mobile health clinics, mass weddings for their daughters, and direct financial aid.

Speaking at a construction site in Dhirpur on Labour Day, she said the government is committed to worker welfare, aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision. She urged workers to register on the revived portal of the Delhi Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board (DBOCWWB) to access schemes. The Labour Department will hold registration camps, and soon, pregnant women workers will receive an honourarium. Mobile vans for health services and financial support for daughters' weddings are also planned.

Two annual mass weddings for workers' daughters will be organised. Minister Kapil Mishra said the portal had been inactive but has now been revived. —*PTI*

CHITHIRAI FESTIVAL

Amid thundering chants of Lord Govinda, Lord Kallazhagar, the presiding deity of Alagar Kovil, entered the Vaigai river in Madurai on Friday, marking the annual Chithirai festival. Adorned in green silk, indicating prosperity and a good harvest, the deity entered the river on a golden horse "vahanam" as lakhs of devotees gathered. It famously merges Shaivism and Vaishnavism, re-enacting the wedding of Goddess Meenakshi to Lord Sundareswarar (Shiva) and the subsequent journey of Lord Kallazhagar (Vishnu) to Madurai -PTI

Life is at stake for 20,000 seafarers stuck in Hormuz

Exhausted by the risk of being hit by missiles or falling debris, the seafarers at Hormuz cannot rest in safe harbours, as nearby ports are not secure - PTI

As the closure of the Strait of Hormuz drags on, the United Nations' International Maritime Organisation has sounded the alarm over a related humanitarian crisis: the plight of the crew stuck on ships at or near the strait.

Up to 20,000 seafarers on 2,000 vessels remain stranded in and around the strait, enduring a combination of physical danger and psychological stress typical of combat zones. They face daily horrors at work. Exhausted by the risk of being hit by missiles or falling debris, they cannot rest in safe harbours, as nearby ports are not secure.

As their supplies dwindle to dangerously low levels, they must ration food and water and rely on charities such as Mission to Seafarers for supplies (at great risk to the charity workers).

The longer the crisis persists, the more likely seafarers will be working after their contracts expire. They risk not being paid and being unable to get home. Desperate seafarers have also reportedly been targeted by scammers offering safe passage through the strait in exchange for cryptocurrency.

The current crisis is deeply troubling. But the grim reality is that even at the best of times, seafarers generally experience appalling working conditions, while contending with geopolitical crises and unpredictable trade cycles.

These workers face financial insecurity, job uncertainty, physical and mental hazards, isolation, overwork and limited career prospects. Fatigue and sleep deprivation expose them to serious injuries or illnesses on vessels that often operate without adequate medical facilities or qualified doctors.

Lessons of Covid

The current crisis echoes problems revealed during the Covid pandemic. Then, some 4,00,000 seafarers were stranded at sea. Many were unpaid, and couldn't be repatriated.

Some ship operators introduced "no crew change" clauses (which ban crew changes while the operator's cargo is onboard). Such clauses in contracts undermine seafarers' rights under the Maritime Labour Convention 2006. This exists to promote safety, security and good working conditions on ships, and protect seafarers' rights.

As a result of an amendment to this convention, seafarers have since been designated as "key workers". This facilitates access to shore leave, repatriation, crew changes and medical care ashore.

However, the amendments do not take effect until December 2027.

More broadly, the Maritime Labour Convention requires shipowners to provide accommodation, food, transportation, cover for medical expenses and repatriation (the cost of the seafarers' journeys home, including accommodation).

But it relies on the countries where ships are registered (known as flag states) to regulate shipping – and ships are constantly moving and beyond the reach of regulators. Many are registered under flags of convenience (that is, not where they are owned) in countries with low labour standards that are seldom enforced.

Risk of attack or abandonment

Many commercial ships currently stuck in the Strait of Hormuz have been targeted in military operations, by both Iranian and US forces.

They also face the unique threat of abandonment. This is where shipowners – in breach of maritime law – leave them without wages, support or maintenance. This occurs when shipowners fail to get new business.

And it is difficult for seafarers to leave the ship on which they work. Maritime law also compels crews to keep ships safe and operational and prevents them abandoning ships except under the most extreme circumstances, such as if the vessel is sinking.

In 2025, 6,223 seafarers were abandoned on 410 ships – the sixth yearly increase in a row.

According to the International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network, there are probably many more unreported cases as seafarers fear dismissal and being blacklisted from other work. Early indications for 2026 are that the number of seafarers abandoned by shipowners already exceeds 6,000 cases. Abandoned seafarers were also owed US$25.8 million in unpaid wages in 2025, of which just $16.5 million was recovered.

Shadow fleets

Most abandonments are linked to the shadow fleet, meaning ships that carry oil, gas and other goods in breach of sanctions. The shadow fleet has expanded to 20 per cent of the world's tankers and 7.5 per cent of LPG carriers.

Shadow fleet vessels have opaque ownership, inadequate insurance and poorly trained crew obtained through illegal recruitment methods bordering on human trafficking.

They are registered in countries with lenient labour laws and poor labour protections, few safety regulations and little oversight. More than half of these ships are more than 15 years old (the traditional cut off age for tankers used by major oil companies) and are in substandard condition. They also use ports where they are unlikely to be inspected.In addition, they are often run by small ship management companies with little technical knowledge or industry experience, about which very little information is available.

Stranded in the strait

Under the circumstances in the strait, seafarers have been denied the right of repatriation. First, the US blockade prevents ships accessing ports from which they could transit. Second, the fuel crisis has driven the price of flights to a level that many shipowners cannot afford. India, which maintains diplomatic relations with Iran and imports 90 per cent of its gas from the Persian Gulf, has negotiated the safe passage of its seafarers. But thousands of others remain stranded, with no states coming to their aid. —*The Conversation*

SALAR ساہر

May Day: Workers face rising costs worldwide

Workers carry a basket of vegetables at a vegetable market on International Labour Day, in Kolkata, West Bengal, Friday -PTI

Activists worldwide marched in May Day rallies, calling for peace, higher wages and better working conditions as many workers grapple with rising energy costs and shrinking purchasing power tied to the Iran war.

The day is a public holiday in many countries, and demonstrations, some of which have turned violent in the past, are expected in many major cities.

"Working people refuse to pay the price for Donald Trump's war in the Middle East," the European Trade Union Confederation, which represents 93 trade union organisations in 41 European countries, said.

"Today's rallies show working people will not stand by and see their jobs and living standards destroyed." In the United States, activists opposing US President Donald Trump's policies are planning marches and boycotts.

Rising energy prices and living costs

Rising living costs linked to the West Asia war are a key theme in this year's rallies.

"There will be a louder call for higher wages and economic relief because of the unprecedented spikes in fuel prices," Renato Reyes, a leader of the left-wing political group Bayan, told The Associated Press, in the Philippines' capital of Manila.

In Indonesia, labour unions have warned against worsening economic pressures at home. "Workers are already living paycheck to paycheck," said Iqbal, president of the Indonesian Trade Union Confederation.

In Pakistan, May Day is a public holiday, but many daily wage earners cannot afford to take time off.

"How will I bring vegetables and other necessities home if I don't work?" said Mohammad Maskeen, a 55-year-old construction worker near Islamabad.

Rising oil prices have fuelled inflation, which the government estimates at about 16 per cent, in a country heavily reliant on financial support from the International Monetary Fund and allied nations.

Demonstrations across the world

Workers' unions traditionally use May Day to rally around wages, pensions, inequality and broader political issues.

Protests are planned from Seoul, Jakarta and Istanbul to most European Union capitals and cities across the United States.

In France, unions called for demonstrations under the slogan "bread, peace and freedom," linking workers' daily concerns to wars.

In Italy, the government approved nearly USD 1.17 billion in job incentives this week. The measures extend tax breaks to encourage hiring young people and disadvantaged women, and seek to address exploitation tied to platform-based work. Opposition parties dismissed the package as "pure propaganda."

France's day off

May Day carries special meaning this year in France after a heated debate about whether employees should be allowed to work on the country's most protected public holiday.

Almost all businesses are closed, and only essential sectors such as hospitals, transport and hotels are exempt.

A recent parliamentary proposal to expand work on the day prompted major outcry from unions and left-wing politicians. "Don't touch May Day," workers' unions said in a joint statement.

Faced with the controversy, the government this week introduced a bill meant to expand May Day work to people staffing bakeries and florists. It is customary in France to give lily of the valley flowers on May Day as a symbol of good luck.

"May 1 is not just any day," Small and Medium-sized Businesses Minister Serge Papin said. "It symbolises social gains stemming from a century of building social rules that have led to the labour code we know in France. It is indeed a special day."

Calls for street protests and boycotts in the US

Activists and labour unions are organising street protests and boycotts across the United States, where May Day is not a federal holiday.

May Day Strong, a coalition of activist groups and labour unions, has called on people to protest under the banner of "workers over billionaires".

Voicing strong opposition to Trump's policies, organisers listed thousands of May Day actions across the country and are seeking an economic blackout through "no school, no work, no shopping."

Demands include taxing the rich and putting an end to the Trump administration's immigration crackdown.

Roots in Chicago

May Day, or International Workers' Day, traces back more than a century to a pivotal period in US labour history.

In the 1880s, unions pushed for an eight-hour workday through strikes and demonstrations. In May 1886, a Chicago rally turned deadly when a bomb exploded and police responded with gunfire. Several labour activists — mostly immigrants — were convicted of conspiracy; four were executed. Unions later designated May 1 to honour workers. A monument in Chicago's Haymarket Square commemorates them with the inscription: "Dedicated to all workers of the world." —*PTI*

LETTERS

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UN chief warns Hormuz disruption could lead to global recession

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres has urged the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, saying that the longer it is choked, "the higher the cost to humanity".

"My message is clear: Open the Strait. Let all ships pass. Let the global economy breathe again," he said on Thursday.

The world may face the "spectre of a global recession" if the freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz is not restored by the end of this year, UN chief Guterres told media personnel in New York.

In the scenario where "severe disruptions persist through the end of the year, inflation skyrockets past 6 per cent, growth plummets to 2 per cent, immense suffering takes hold, especially among the world's most vulnerable populations," he said.

"And we confront the spectre of a global recession with dramatic impacts on people, on the economy, and on political and social stability," he said

"The longer this vital artery is choked, the harder it will be to reverse the damage."

Setting out three possible trajectories, he said that even if restrictions on shipping and trade were lifted immediately, "supply chains will take months to recover," with global growth falling from 3.4 to 3.1 per cent, inflation rising to 4.4 per cent and trade slowing sharply.

"And a world still reeling from the shocks of a pandemic and the war in Ukraine will endure further economic distress. This is the best-case scenario," he said.

"The Middle East crisis is lumbering into its third month," Guterres told reporters at the news conference at UN headquarters. "Despite a fragile ceasefire, the consequences grow dramatically worse with each passing hour."

He said he is "deeply concerned about the curtailment of navigational rights and freedoms in the area of the Strait of Hormuz," warning it is "impeding the delivery of oil, gas, fertiliser, and other critical commodities" and "strangling the global economy."

"As with every conflict, the whole of humanity is paying the price - even if a few are reaping huge profits," he said, adding that "the pain will be felt for a long time to come."

WAR COULD PUSH 32 MILLION PEOPLE INTO POVERTY

He explained a second scenario, where disruption drags on through midyear, would push 32 million people into poverty, cause fertiliser shortages, reduce crop yields, and leave 45 million more people facing extreme hunger.

If the war drags on through midyear, it will push 32 million people into poverty - WFP

With no end in sight to the shipping stand-off in the Strait of Hormuz and as Brent crude oil prices hovered at around $118 in trading on Thursday, the prospect of running out of fuel, gas and more has focused attention in the world's capitals on finding solutions, quickly.

Southeast Asia and South Asia were first to be impacted by the most severe energy crisis in a generation, said Dario Liguti from the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), and but he warned that "it is an unfolding energy crisis," with motorists in Europe already bracing themselves every time they fill up the tank.

Guterres highlighted diplomatic efforts underway by the head of UN Project Services (UNOPS) who is leading the UN Task Force on the strait to provide a possible humanitarian corridor.

The head of the UN maritime organization, IMO, is likewise developing a framework to evacuate ships and seafarers if safe passage can be guaranteed, he said. —*ANI*

Food shortage likely in Africa: World's largest fertiliser firm

The Iran war could cause massive food shortages and price rises in some of Africa's poorest and most vulnerable communities, the head of the world's largest fertiliser company has said.

Svein Tore Holsether, the chief executive of Yara International, said, "The most important thing we can do now is raise the alarm on what we are seeing right now – that there is a risk of a global auction on fertiliser that means it becomes unaffordable for those most vulnerable."

"Africa is actually quite well positioned to be a major food producer, not only for self-sufficiency, but even for exports to the rest of the world, but the reality is that they are massive food importers. But we need to be aware in this part of the world of the potential consequences that if we get to a global auction on food, there will not be a famine in Europe – but we need to be aware of who we are taking the food away from."

Yara International is a Norwegian multinational with plants in 60 countries and sales in 140.

We're not at war with Iran: US on deadline

Trump virtually rules out resuming strikes; Iran tables new proposal to open Hormuz

WASHINGTON, 1 MAY

The Trump administration stated that the war in Iran has already ended because of the ceasefire that began in early April, an interpretation that would allow the White House to avoid the need to seek congressional approval.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La told NBC that "we are not at war," and therefore there was no reason for US President Donald Trump to seek Congressional approval for troop deployment. Under the 1973 War Powers Resolution, the President must seek Congress approval within 60 days for a conflict, or remove military forces from the region.

Notably, while the ceasefire has since been extended, Iran maintains its chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, and the US Navy is maintaining a blockade to prevent Iran's oil tankers from getting out to sea. There has been a 90 per cent drop in ships traversing the Strait, with only 10 ships crossing daily on average.

While Democrats have been pushing for a formal approval of the Iran war, the administration's claim that the conflict has been "terminated" may throw the 60-day deadline for a toss.

Meanwhile, Trump claimed that Iran was "dying to make a deal" and virtually ruled out resuming air strikes.

"Their Navy is gone. Their Air Force is gone... their drone factories are about 82 per cent down. Their missile production had also been hit.

Their missile factories are almost 90 per cent down," he said at the Oval Office.

"We obliterated that nuclear capacity of theirs," Trump said, adding that the Iranian economy was crashing as a result of the US blockade of the Hormuz. "They're not getting any money from oil. And hopefully, it can be worked out very soon."

Meanwhile, Iranian state-media said that the Islamic Republic submitted a fresh proposal through Pakistan to cease its military operations in the Strait. This is likely to get rejected by Washington.

The proposal suggests the restoration of maritime traffic through Hormuz, while deferring critical concerns regarding its nuclear programme to future discussions.

Meanwhile, Israeli strikes continued in Lebanon despite the ceasefire. At least four people were killed in a series of strikes, while the militant Hezbollah said it fired rockets and drones, including one in northern Israel and wounded two soldiers. *—Agencies*

Don threatens to withdraw troops from Italy, Spain

WASHINGTON, 1 MAY

US President Donald Trump said that he "probably will" withdraw American troops from Italy and Spain after criticising their stance on the Iran war.

Such a move would likely exacerbate the diplomatic rift between Washington and NATO.

"Italy has not been of any help to us and Spain has been horrible, absolutely horrible," Trump told press at the Oval Office.

Official data from late 2025 shows that there are 12,662 active-duty troops in Italy and 3,814 in Spain. Trump earlier said that he was considering withdrawing troops from Germany, which is the primary hub with over 36,000 personnel. Trump earlier said that Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni "lacked "courage" on Iran, while slamming Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez for not allowing the US to use Spain's airspace to launch attacks. *—ANI*

Iran Prez seeks FM's ouster: Report

LONDON, 1 MAY

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian and Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf are seeking Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's removal, according to a media report.

They believe Araghchi is following the Revolutionary Guard Chief Ahmad Vahidi instructions in nuclear talks, rather than the government's line, two sources told Iran International – a UK based publication with ties to Saudi Arabia.

The sources claimed that Araghchi was acting without informing the President, and instead reporting to Vahidi and acting on the latter's command. Pezeshkian has reportedly told his aides that he would seek to remove Araghchi if such conduct continues.

Iran International earlier claimed that Vahidi had taken "de facto" control of the Iranian government, overruling Pezeshkian.

Ghalibaf had led the Iranian delegation in the negotiations with the US in Islamabad last month. Salar could not independently verify the claims. *—Agencies*

Pakistan lacks strategic oil reserves like India: Minister

ISLAMABAD, 1 MAY

Pakistan lacks "strategic oil reserves like India" to shield itself from the spiralling fuel prices, said the country's Petroleum Minister Musadik Malik.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif recently reduced petrol prices by PKR 80 to PKR 378 per litre, after the previous 42.7 per cent price hike had already driven costs from PKR 321.17 to PKR 458.41, leading to massive protests in Pakistan and fuel shortages.

"We don't have any strategic oil reserves... we only have commercial reserves. We have crude worth five to seven days. And the refined product with OMCs can only last 20-21 days. We are not like India, which has 60-70 days of reserves and can release it with just a single signature," Malik said.

He added that Pakistan was part of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which has severely restricted its policy options, but India was not, which gave New Delhi the "fiscal space" to "insulate themselves". *—PTI*

MOJTABA IN PERFECT HEALTH DESPITE INJURIES: AIDE

Ayatollah Mohsen Qomi, Member of Iran's Assembly of Experts, said that Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei was in "perfect health" and "managing affairs", despite sustaining injuries earlier. Qomi said that Mojtaba not appearing in public for his safety, and denounced reports about his incapacitation as "tricks" by Western media. Mojtaba is "the proof of God on earth," Qomi said.

— FB

'Nobody Against Putin' director's Oscar seized at JFK

LOS ANGELES, 1 MAY

Russian filmmaker Pasha Talankin, co-director of the Oscar-winning documentary 'Mr. Nobody Against Putin,' lost his Oscar statuette after security officials at JFK Airport refused to let him board a flight with it. Talankin, who also starred in the film, said an official stopped him at the security checkpoint on Wednesday from carrying the 3.8kg award. He explained he had flown with the Oscar over a dozen times since winning in March without issue. Despite offers from Lufthansa staff to hold the statuette or store it in the cockpit, security overruled these options. Talankin was forced to check the Oscar as cargo, but upon arrival in Frankfurt, the box was missing. *—PTI*

Don scraps tariffs on scotch whisky after King's visit

WASHINGTON, 1 MAY

US President Donald Trump announced the removal of tariffs and trade restrictions on UK whisky in honour of King Charles III and Queen Camilla's visit. In a post on Truth Social, he said, "In Honour of the King and Queen of the United Kingdom, who have just left... I will be removing the Tariffs and Restrictions on Whiskey," especially relating to Scotland's whisky industry and Kentucky's bourbon. He cited long-standing trade ties, especially in barrel production, as the reason. Trump credited the Royal visit for influencing the policy change: "The King and Queen got me to do something that nobody else was able to do." *—ANI*

Pak kills 13 'terrorists' along Afghan border

PESHAWAR, 1 MAY

Pakistani security forces have killed at least 13 terrorists along the Afghanistan border in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, according to the military's media wing. The terrorists, affiliated with Fitna-al-Khwarij, were killed in Mohmand and North Waziristan districts on 28 and 29 April, stated the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). Fitna al-Khwarij is the term the state uses for the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). This comes amid an increase in hostilities between the two neighbors after a brief ceasefire. The statement urged Afghan authorities to stop the TTP from using Afghan soil, emphasising that violence increased in 2025, with terrorist attacks rising 34 per cent. *—PTI*

— WIKIPEDIA

Britney Spears charged with DUI in California

LOS ANGELES, 1 MAY

Britney Spears has been charged with driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs in California, authorities stated. The 44-year-old pop star was arrested on March 4 after being pulled over for erratic driving on US 101 near her home. She appeared impaired and was taken to Ventura County jail. Spears was released on bail the next day. Her arraignment is scheduled for Monday; as the charge is a misdemeanour, she is not required to appear in court. The district attorney's office may offer her a "wet reckless" plea, involving probation and fines. Spears' career includes hits like 'Toxic' and 'Oops! I Did It Again,' but she has faced personal struggles and legal issues over the years. *—PTI*

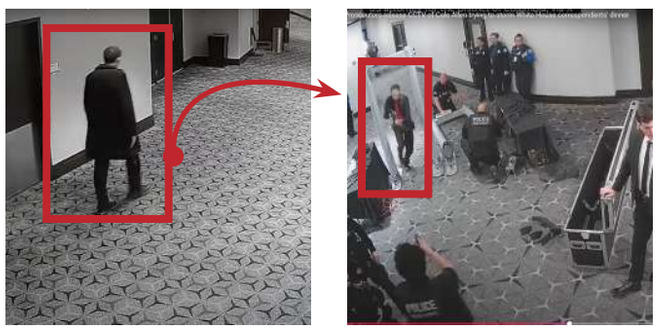
Prosecutors release video of armed man storming WH dinner

WASHINGTON, 1 MAY

US federal prosecutors on Thursday released video from the White House Correspondents' Dinner showing a man, identified as Cole Tomas Allen, armed with guns and knives, attempting to bypass security to assassinate President Donald Trump or his officials at the event.

The footage released by Jeanine Pirro, the US attorney for Washington, comes amid questions over whose bullet struck a Secret Service officer as Allen ran through security with a long gun toward the hotel ballroom packed with journalists, administration officials and others.

Prosecutors had previously claimed the agent was shot in the bullet-resistant vest during the incident but had not confirmed it was Allen who shot the agent. Pirro, however, said that there is no evidence that the officer was hit by friendly fire.



The US Department of Justice released videos of the suspected assassin Cole Tomas Allen running through security at the White House *—DOJ*

Allen agreed earlier on Thursday to remain jailed while he awaits trial. He did not enter a plea during his brief appearance in federal court.

Allen was injured but was not shot during the Saturday night attack at the Washington Hilton, which disrupted one of the highest-profile annual events in the nation's capital. *—PTI*

1 killed as Russia hammers Ukraine's energy infrastructure

KYIV, 1 MAY

At least one person was killed and several injured as Russia launched 210 strike drones, including 140 Iranian "shahed" drones, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy stated on X on Friday.

"In the Kharkiv region, railway infrastructure was attacked, traction substations were hit. Cars caught fire. Thousands of families were left without electricity due to shelling. They also hit the Sumy region and Zaporizhia region," Zelenskyy stated. He added that five people were injured in the Odesa, as drones damaged two apartment buildings.

Russia fired 210 drones at Ukraine *—UKRAINE EMERGENCY SERVICE*

"If Russia does not want to move to diplomacy voluntarily, it must be forced to do so," Zelenskyy stressed. "The aggressor must be weakened to ensure greater security for Europe. Sanctions policy must continue."

The strikes come after US President Donald Trump said that Russian President Vladmir Putin had floated a "short ceasefire". Zelenskyy sought more details about the conversation between the two.

Meanwhile, Putin said earlier this week that Kyiv's attacks "against civilian infrastructure are becoming more frequent," adding that the strikes on an oil refinery on Tuapse, near the Black Sea "could potentially cause serious environmental consequences.

US HOUSE ENDS DHS SHUTDOWN AFTER 70 DAYS

WASHINGTON, 1 MAY

US President Donald Trump signed a spending bill on Thursday ending the 76-day partial government shutdown that caused widespread disruption, marking the end to the longest shutdown in US history.

Earlier that day, the House approved a Senate-passed bipartisan $70 billion bill to fund the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which oversees everything from immigration enforcement to airport security. The Senate had unanimously approved the package a month ago, but the bill had languished in the House.

The shutdown began on 14 February due to a dispute over Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) funding after fatal shooting of two US citizens by agents in Minneapolis. Democrats withheld funding for ICE and Border Patrol pending reforms, while Republicans refused to fund other DHS agencies without including those agencies. To break the impasse, Republicans decided to tackle ICE funding separately. *—Agencies*

Israel calls Sumud flotilla a 'Hamas PR stunt'

TEL AVIV, 1 MAY

Israel on Friday reiterated its intention to continue its naval blockade of the Gaza Strip, calling the massive Global Sumud Flotilla a "Hamas-led" effort and "another provocation".

On Thursday, Israel detained around 175 activists aboard 22 boats carrying aid near the island of Crete. All but two Palestinian activists have been released. The two activists - Saif Abu Keshek and Thiago Avila - will be taken to Israel for questioning due to alleged terrorist connections.

The organisers of the Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF) denounced the action as "piracy", saying members were seized unlawfully more than 965km (600 miles) from Gaza. Israel's Foreign Ministry, however, called the flotilla, which aims "to break Israel's illegal siege and deliver life-saving humanitarian aid to Gaza" according to the organisers, a "PR stunt".

UN bodies estimates that least 1.6 million people in Gaza – or 77 per cent of population – are still facing high levels of acute food insecurity in the Strip, including at least 1,00,000 children, despite the ceasefire in October.

Israel released a map, expanding its zone of military control in Gaza

> **No ship and no Hamas supporter reached our territory, and not even our territorial waters. They were turned back and will return to their countries of origin. They will continue to see Gaza on YouTube**
>
> —Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Prime Minister

Previous GSF missions included high-profile activists like Greta Thunberg. *—ANI*

Suu Kyi moved from prison to house arrest after 5 yrs

BANGKOK, 30 APRIL

Myanmar's detained former leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been moved from prison to house arrest, state television announced on Thursday night.

The Military Information Team also released a photo showing the 80-year-old Suu Kyi sitting on a wooden bench in a skirt and traditional white blouse. She is sitting behind a low table facing two unidentified men, one in a police uniform and the other wearing another kind of uniform.

The Nobel Peace Prize winner has been in detention since 1 February, 2021, when the army seized power from her elected government. She has not been seen publicly since then, and the last official photo showing her was released on 24 May, 2021, showing her in court.

She was originally sentenced to 33 years in prison in late 2022 for several offenses that her supporters and rights groups described as attempts to discredit her and legitimise the army takeover that removed her from office, as well as to prevent her return to politics. *—PTI*

ALONGSIDE RUSSIA, CHINA

US retains India on IP priority watchlist

WASHINGTON, 1 MAY

India, China and Russia are among six countries on the US Trade Representative's (USTR) priority watch list, which flags trading partners with inadequate or ineffective protection and enforcement of intellectual property (IP) rights. Placement on the watch list indicates that a trading partner has inadequate IP protection, enforcement, or market access for US persons relying on intellectual property.

In the USTR's Special 301 Report on Intellectual Property Protection and Enforcement 2026, released on Thursday, the three other countries on the priority watch list are Indonesia, Chile and Venezuela. Meanwhile, 19 countries, including the EU, Turkey, and Pakistan, are on the (non-priority) watch list.

—MAGNIFIC

"India remains one of the world's most challenging major economies with respect to IP protection and enforcement," the report noted.

The report also designated Vietnam a Priority Foreign Country (PFC), a category reserved for nations with the most egregious IP policies that significantly harm US products. Within 30 days, the USTR will decide whether to initiate an investigation on the grounds cited in the report. According to the USTR, the US first proposed an IP Work Plan to Vietnam in 2020 to address concerns in the Special 301 Report, followed by a revised proposal in 2023. However, the USTR claim Vietnam is not negotiating in good faith or making progress toward effective IP protection.

- The report said that "India remains one of the world's most challenging major economies with respect to the protection and enforcement of intellectual property"

The Special 301 Report is an annual assessment of intellectual property protection and enforcement practices. *—PTI*

UK terror threat raised to 'severe' after antisemitic attack

LONDON, 1 MAY

UK Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood *—WIKIPEDIA*

The UK's terror threat level has been elevated from "substantial" to "severe," indicating a highly likely attack, following antisemitic stabbings in north-west London. The Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC), linked to UK security services, announced the change on Thursday, citing a rise in Islamist and extreme right-wing threats from individuals and groups within the UK.

UK Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood confirmed the increase, stating, "Today, the national threat level has increased to 'severe', which means a terrorist attack is considered highly likely." She added that the rise was driven by broader threats, not solely the recent attack. The government announced increased funding to protect Jewish communities, including police and security at synagogues, schools, and community centres.

The threat level had previously been at "substantial," meaning an attack was likely. "Severe" is one step below "critical," which signifies an imminent attack. Mahmood urged vigilance and encouraged reporting concerns, following the stabbing of two Jewish men, aged 76 and 34, with a 45-year-old Somalia-born suspect in custody. *—PTI*

-PTI

India's power consumption up 4% in April

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

India's power consumption witnessed a 4.04 per cent growth to 153.99 billion units (BU) in April compared to 148.01 BU in April 2025 as unseasonal rains subdued power demand in the first half of the month. However, due to the rise in mercury level, the peak power demand jumped to a record high of 256.11 GW last month from 235.32 GW in April 2025. The Power Ministry said that the peak power demand may hit 270 GW in the summer of 2026. The peak power demand was 242.77 GW in June 2025. Power demand and consumption will further increase as the Indian Meteorological Department has predicted a harsh summer this year —*PTI*

NSDL Q4 profit up 8.4% at Rs 90 crore

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL) reported an 8.4 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 90.3 crore for the March quarter of FY26, up from Rs 83.3 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal. The total income grew 23.6 per cent to Rs 487 crore in Q4 FY26 from Rs 394 crore a year ago, the depository said in a statement on Friday. For the full financial year, NSDL's net profit grew 11 per cent to Rs 380 crore, while total income rose 8 per cent to Rs 1,660.2 crore. The board of directors has recommended a final dividend of Rs 4 per equity share for FY26 —*PTI*

Pilots body seeks FDTL relaxations after pilots' death

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) on Friday urged the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to disallow relaxations in fatigue management norms for airlines. This follows the deaths of two pilots due to heart attacks in the last two days, raising concerns about flight and crew safety. ALPA India demanded that the DGCA establish a time-bound roadmap to implement Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) regulations, including a fatigue reporting system for pilots and quarterly public disclosures. An Air India and Akasa Air pilot suffered heart attacks in the last two days. Neither was on duty. The Air India pilot died in Bali during scheduled rest, while the Akasa Air pilot died during training. —*PTI*

-PTI

Kargil gets dairy plant with capacity of 10K litres/day

LEH/JAMMU, 1 MAY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah laid the foundation stone for a 10,000 litres-per-day dairy processing plant in Kargil on Friday, launching dairy development initiatives across Ladakh. The projects include mobile milk testing labs, modern cooling systems, and improved dairy infrastructure to boost self-reliance. The Rs 25 crore plant is being developed by Indian Dairy Machinery Company, a National Dairy Development Board's (NDDB) subsidy, with Rs 12.74 crore from the Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Rs 10 crore from NDDB, and the rest via LUTDCF funds routed through Himachal Pradesh. About 1,700 farmers are involved, with daily milk collection reaching 7,000 litres and farmers paid over Rs 15 crore —*PTI*

Government cuts export duty on diesel and ATF

Road & infra cess on export of diesel will be nill for 15 days

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The Centre had hiked export duties on diesel and ATF to Rs 55.5 per litre and Rs 42 per litre in April –*AI IMAGE*

The government has cut the windfall gains tax on the export of diesel to Rs 23 per litre and aviation turbine fuel (ATF) to Rs 33/litre, effective Friday.

The Finance Ministry, in a statement, said there will be no change in existing excise duty rates on petrol and diesel for domestic consumption.

The special additional excise duty on export of diesel was reduced to Rs 23 per litre from Rs 55.5 per litre, and ATF to Rs 33 per litre from Rs 42 per litre.

The road and infrastructure cess on the export of diesel will be nil for the next fortnight, beginning 1 May.

The rate of duty on export of petrol will remain nil, said the Finance Ministry said.

The government had, on 26 March, imposed an export duty at Rs 21.50 a litre on diesel, and on ATF at Rs 29.5 a litre. In a review on 11 April, the duties were hiked to Rs 55.5/litre and Rs 42/litre, respectively.

The windfall tax was levied to increase domestic availability of the fuel amid the US-Israel and Iran war.

The levies were also aimed at not allowing exporters to take undue advantage due to price differences, as globally crude oil prices had risen since the beginning of the war.

Crude oil prices have surged to a four-year high of USD 126 per barrel, from about USD 73 per barrel before the war.

The windfall tax was to ensure domestic availability of petroleum products by disincentivising exports in the backdrop of the West Asia crises, the Ministry said.

Meanwhile, oil forms have increased the price of aviation turbine fuel for international airlines by 5 per cent on Friday.

ATF prices have been increased by USD 76.55 per kilolitre, or 5.33 per cent, to USD 1511.86 per kl in Delhi. The ATF price for domestic airlines remains has however. not been increased. —*PTI*

8.7% GROWTH

April GST collection hits record high of Rs 2.42L crore

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Total Gross GST Revenue rose 8.7 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in April 2026, reaching a total of Rs 2,42,702 crore, compared to the Rs 2,23,265 crore collected during the same month in last year, according to the data released by the Finance Ministry.

The growth was primarily driven by a significant surge in import-related taxes, which outpaced domestic collections during the start of the new fiscal year.

The gross revenue from imports stood at Rs 57,580 crore for the month, marking a 25.8 per cent increase from the Rs 45,754 crore recorded in April 2025. Meanwhile, gross domestic revenue grew by 4.3 per cent to reach Rs 1,85,122 crore. This domestic total included central GST of Rs 52,140 crore, state GST of Rs 61,331 crore, and integrated GST of Rs 71,651 crore.

After adjusting for refunds, the net GST revenue for April 2026 settled at Rs 2,10,909 crore, representing a 7.3 per cent increase over the previous year. Total refunds for the month rose by 19.3 per cent to Rs 31,793 crore.

While domestic refunds saw a sharp rise of 54.6 per cent to Rs 19,996 crore, export-related refunds through the ICEGATE system experienced a 14 per cent decline, totaling Rs 11,797 crore.

Maharashtra (+40%), Karnataka (+42%), Telangana (+36%) and Puducherry (+108%) recorded strong YoY SGST growth in April, while some states like Ladakh (-8%) and Jharkhand (0%) saw declines or no change.

In March, India's gross GST collections stood at Rs 2,00,064 crore, marking an 8.8 per cent increase. —*ANI*

FPIs pull out Rs 60,847 cr in April, outflows hit Rs 1.9L cr

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

March witnessed a record outflow of Rs 1.17 lakh crore -*REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE*

A Foreign investors continued their relentless sell-off in Indian equities, withdrawing Rs 60,847 crore (£6.5 billion) in April amid escalating geopolitical tensions and global macroeconomic uncertainties dampening risk appetite.

With this, total outflows by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have surged to Rs 1.92 lakh crore (£20.5 billion) in the first four months of 2026, far exceeding the Rs 1.66 lakh crore (£17.7 billion) outflow in all of 2025, according to NSDL data.

FPIs remained net sellers every month except February, which saw an inflow of Rs 22,615 crore (£2.4 billion) after Rs 35,962 crore (£3.8 billion) was withdrawn in January. March experienced a record outflow of Rs 1.17 lakh crore (£12.5 billion), continuing into April with Rs 60,847 crore (£6.5 billion) withdrawn.

Himanshu Srivastava from Morningstar said escalating West Asia tensions pushed crude oil prices higher, raising inflation concerns and reducing near-term rate cut expectations.

Vaqar Javed Khan from Angel One said crude crossing USD 100 per barrel, a weakening rupee, and inflation concerns made Indian valuations appear expensive.

He noted that stabilisation could occur if tensions ease and crude prices fall below USD 90, supported by domestic institutional buying. However, rising US bond yields and geopolitical tensions could trigger renewed selling pressure. —*PTI*

ACROSS TOWNS & VILLAGES

UPI records transactions worth Rs 314 lakh cr in FY26

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

UPI emerged as a key pillar of India's digital economy -*REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE*

Unified Payments Interface (UPI) clocks 24,162 crore transactions worth Rs 314 lakh crore in FY26, the government said, underscoring the continued scale and adoption of India's flagship digital payments platform.

Government data highlights the growing reliance on UPI across urban, semi-urban, and rural regions, driven by ease of use, interoperability, and expanding digital infrastructure.

The government noted that UPI has emerged as a key pillar of India's digital economy, enabling seamless real-time payments and fostering financial inclusion by bringing individuals, small businesses, and micro-entrepreneurs into the formal financial system.

The strong performance in FY26 builds on sustained momentum over the past few years, supported by increasing merchant acceptance, smartphone penetration, and policy initiatives aimed at promoting cashless transactions.

Industry stakeholders say the momentum has carried into the new financial year as well.

Anand Kumar Bajaj, Founder, MD and CEO, PayNearby, said, "In April 2026, UPI processed 22.35 billion transactions worth Rs 29.03 lakh crore. It is becoming clear that digital payments are no longer just about growth; they are becoming a natural part of everyday life."

He said that ongoing developments in security, recurring payments, and credit integration are enhancing reliability and user confidence. —*ANI*

Vedanta shares double to 84.5% amid demerger hope

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Share price of mining conglomerate Vedanta Limited has nearly doubled in the last one year as investors bet big on optimism from the demerger and steady financial performance.

Vedanta stock advanced 84.5 per cent between 30 April, 2025 and 29 April this year. During the rally, Vedanta shares touched a 52-week high of Rs 794.90, increasing the company's market capitalisation by Rs 1.38 lakh crore.

The company's board had approved a demerger, paving the way for five varied businesses. Shareholders having one share of Vedanta as of 29 April will receive four additional shares of the new companies. —*PTI*

'Government to retain budgeted capex'

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The government is committed to the budgeted Rs 12.22 lakh crore capital expenditure in the current fiscal despite the fiscal stress arising from the ongoing West Asia situation.

Expenditure secretary V Vualnam said the upcoming few months, the next quarter and the year ahead would be very difficult to envisage with lots of possible stress points.

"So the fiscal stress is indeed very much a reality, but at the same time the priority sectors... the CAPEX would really be a priority item which we would like to preserve and ensure that it continues at the budgeted level," Vualnam said at the ICPP Growth Conference organised by the Ashoka University.

He said thehighways, railways, shipping, ports, and urban development sectors would be the focus areas for FY'27 capex. —*PTI*

India, UK discuss ways to boost bilateral trade

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

India aims to double bilateral trade with UK before 2030 -*FREEPIK*

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal held a virtual interaction with UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade Peter Kyle on Friday to discuss strengthening bilateral trade and investment ties, with a focus on fully leveraging opportunities under the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

Sharing details of the interaction, Goyal said on X that the discussions centred on enhancing economic cooperation and deepening engagement between the two countries across sectors.

Speaking at the India-UK CEO Forum last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had expressed confidence that India and the UK would double bilateral trade from around USD 56 billion before the 2030 target.

PM Modi had described CETA as "not just a trade agreement, but a roadmap for shared progress and shared prosperity," highlighting its role in strengthening ties between the two economies.

He had also emphasised that the agreement would improve market access, support MSMEs, and create new employment opportunities.

The engagement reflects continued efforts by both countries to expand the benefits of the trade pact, aimed at improving market access, boosting investments and strengthening economic linkages. —*ANI*

India, UAE trade crossed $ 100B after 2022 FTA: Goyal

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The India-UAE free trade agreement, which came into force in May 2022, has helped the bilateral trade to cross USD 100 billion, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said.

The bilateral merchandise trade stood at USD 101.25 billion in 2025-26, with trade expanding in key sectors. India's exports to the UAE rose about 2 per cent to USD 37.36 billion, while imports were up 0.77 per cent to USD 63.89 billion —*PTI*

FIRST IN INDIA

Barrier-less toll system launched in Gujarat

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The free-flow barrier-less tolling system enables seamless toll collections without requiring vehicles to stop –*REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE*

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari on Friday announced the launch of India's first multi-lane free flow barrier-less tolling system at the Chorayasi Toll Plaza on the Surat-Bharuch section of NH-48 in Gujarat, marking a big shift in tolling on highways.

Gadkari, in a social media post on X, said the state-of-the-art system enables seamless toll collection without requiring vehicles to stop, using advanced technologies such as automatic number plate recognition with AI analytics and RFID-based Electronic Toll Collection (FASTag).

The Highways Minister noted that the introduction of multi-lane free flowmarks a major milestone in the digitisation of India's tolling ecosystem and the modernisation of the national highway infrastructure in line with global standards.

The system is expected to significantly reduce travel time, decongest traffic on highways, improve fuel efficiency, lower vehicular emissions, and minimise human intervention in toll operations, he added.

Gadkari stated that barrier-less tolling will enhance 'ease of living' for citizens and promote 'ease of doing business' by enabling faster, more efficient movement of goods and logistics across the country. The new system would be implemented on several national highways from December. —*PTI*

Apple CEO hails double digit growth in India

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Apple CEO Tim Cook expressed enthusiasm about India during the company's Q2 FY2026 earnings call, highlighting the country's rapid growth and market potential.

Cook said India is the world's second-largest smartphone and third-largest PC market.

Despite strong performance, Apple's market share remains modest, indicating significant opportunities ahead.

He said, "I'm over the moon excited about India," emphasising the size of the opportunity.

Cook pointed out that many of Apple's customers in India are new to their products, reflecting growth in the middle class and increasing adoption.

Apple's net income for the quarter rose by 19.36 per cent to USD 29.57 billion, with revenue increasing 17 per cent to USD 111.2 billion year-on-year.

The iPhone segment grew 22 per cent to USD 57 billion, with Cook noting that the iPhones grew double digits in key markets, including India.

He highlighted ongoing product launches and the potential for further growth, underlining India's importance in Apple's global strategy and the expansion plans. —*PTI*

-AIFF

Bibiano announces Indian squad for Men's AFC U-17 AC

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Head coach Bibiano Fernandes on Friday named a 23-member Indian squad for the men's AFC U-17 Asian Cup beginning in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, from 5 May. The Blue Colts are currently in Doha, where they have played against Qatar in two friendly matches (1-1 and 0-0) behind closed doors, and will travel to Jeddah on 3 May. India has been drawn in Group D, alongside Australia and Uzbekistan. The fourth team in the group, North Korea, has withdrawn from the tournament, making it a three-team group. Bibiano's boys play Australia on 6 May and Uzbekistan on 10 May. The top two teams from the group will progress to the quarter-finals, which also ensures qualification for the FIFA U17 World Cup Qatar 2026.—*PTI*

India beat Macau 8-1 in U-18 Ice Hockey Asia Cup

KYRGYZSTAN, 1 MAY

India beat Macau 8–1 in the U-18 Ice Hockey Asia Cup, with captain Gurtej Singh Bhatti leading the charge while scoring four goals in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

India opened strongly and built an early lead, while staying in control through all three periods.

Ajay Dangi of Rajasthan opened the scoring for India, and with Bhatti scoring four goals, the team hit their stride as Itfiqar Hussain, Tanzin Tashi, and Devansh Sharma added one goal each.

"We started with clear intent and maintained our pace through all three periods. The team created good opportunities and capitalised well.—*PTI*

Psychologist testifies, Maradona had bipolar disorder

PARIS, 1 MAY

A psychologist charged in the trial over Diego Maradona's death told an Argentine court on Thursday that the soccer great had bipolar disorder and was a narcissist, and required a zero-alcohol treatment plan, Argentine media reported. Carlos Diaz, 34, is facing the charge of manslaughter with reckless intent for prescribing the wrong medication. He is one of seven defendants accused of criminal responsibility in the death of the former Argentine captain and national coach. "There was bipolar disorder and narcissism," newspaper El Clarin cited Diaz as saying at the trial in Buenos Aires.—*PTI*

-PTI

Cricket Canada appoints Monty as head coach

TORONTO, 1 MAY

Cricket Canada has appointed Monty Desai, well-known for his work with associate nations and franchise leagues, as head coach of its men's national team, as the organization looks to press the reset button after being dogged by allegations of corruption and mismanagement. Following Canada's participation in the T20 World Cup 2026 and ahead of key upcoming ICC pathway competitions, this appointment is a "strategic step toward building momentum" and achieving greater international consistency. Our foremost priority is to restore Cricket Canada's prominence through performance, professionalism, and a renewed and vitalized sense of purpose.—*PTI*

CSK & MI face off in a battle for survival

CSK spinners hope to exploit slow surface, MI bank on their batters

CHENNAI, 1 MAY

Their IPL 2026 campaigns hanging by a thread, Chennai Super Kings and Mumbai Indians face a must-win showdown here on Saturday, with both sides desperate to reverse their inconsistent form and stay afloat in the playoff race.

The two most successful franchises in IPL history have endured a forgettable campaign so far, with neither side able to build sustained momentum.

While CSK have found conditions at the MA Chidambaram Stadium more familiar, their performances have lacked the clinical edge that has defined them over the years.

Inconsistent CSK, struggling MI face off in a battle for survival -*PTI*

Their batting has been inconsistent, particularly in the middle overs, while the bowling unit, traditionally their strength at home, has struggled to close out games under pressure. Mumbai Indians, too, have blown hot and cold this season. Despite flashes of brilliance from their top order, the five-time champions have been let down by a fragile middle order and an underwhelming bowling attack that has failed to defend totals or contain opposition batters at crucial junctures. With the league entering a decisive phase, this contest assumes added significance as both teams look to turn their fortunes.

CSK will hope their spinners can exploit the slow Chepauk surface, while MI will bank on their power hitters to counter the spin threat. Given their current form, neither side starts as a clear favourite, making this clash a battle of survival rather than dominance in what has traditionally been the IPL's marquee rivalry.

CSK VS MI @ MA Chidambaram Stadium
Match starts at
7.30 pm IST

Ambrish replaces injured Mavi in SRH squad

Sunrisers Hyderabad on Friday picked RS Ambrish as an injury replacement for Shivam Mavi for the remainder of the Indian Premier League. "Mavi, a right-arm medium pacer, has been ruled out of the ongoing season due to a groin injury," said IPL in a statement.

All-rounder Ambrish was a part of the triumphant India Under-19 squad at the World Cup earlier this year. He was also India Under-19's joint-highest wicket-taker at the tournament, with 11 wickets against his name. —*PTI*

I'm more focused on team goals, says Bhuvneshwar

Seasoned Royal Challengers Bengaluru pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar said he has reached a stage in his career where team success takes precedence over individual milestones. The 36-year-old, who is currently the leading wicket-taker in the tournament, returned figures of 3 for 28, his fifth three-wicket haul of the season, in RCB's four-wicket loss to Gujarat Titans, taking him to the top of the bowling chart.While the performance earned him the Purple Cap, Bhuvneshwar downplayed its significance, emphasising a shift in priorities that comes with experience. "It's good that I got the Purple Cap. But I think I have come out of that time where I want to achieve something individually," Bhuvneshwar said at the post-match press confe rence.

Controversies not a positive reflection of team: Sangakkara

Rajasthan Royals head coach Kumar Sangakkara said the fines his team members, including skipper Riyan Parag, have copped for two off-field incidents do not reflect well on the team. On Thursday, Parag was fined 25 per cent of his match fee for vaping inside the dressing room during the game against the Punjab Kings. He was found guilty of bringing the game into disrepute.

This was after team manager Romi Bhinder was fined Rs one lakh for a PMOA protocol breach related to the use of his phone in the dugout earlier in the season. "I think it is, of course, a reflection that is not positive on the team, a controversy of any kind," Sangakkara said ahead of the game against the Delhi Capitals.

12-member Indian shotgun squad set for year's 2nd ISSF WC stage

ALMATY, 1 MAY

A 12-member Indian shotgun squad is all set to take part in the year's second International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup in Almaty, Kazakhstan, beginning with the team arrivals on Saturday.

A total of 284 athletes, representing 42 National Olympic Committees (NOCs), are in the fray for the five Olympic events on the 10-day roster. Eight members of the Indian squad are also travelling to compete as RPO (ranking points only) shooters.

Competitions begin with the men's and women's skeet qualifiers on Monday, with the finals scheduled for the next day. The two trap finals are listed for 9 May, with the fifth and final final, the trap mixed team, scheduled for next Saturday.

-ISSF

The shotgun squad began its international engagements in Tangier, Morocco, in March, where the first World Cup stage was played.

Day one of the competitions will feature three Indian Olympians: senior pros Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Anantjeet Singh Naruka in the men's skeet and Raiza Dhillon in the women's skeet. All three will be seen in international action for the first time this year.

Besides the all-conquering Italians, Indian shooters will be up against top shooters from strong shotgun nations like Finland, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Greece, Peru, and Qatar, among others. —*PTI*

THOMAS CUP QUARTERS

India blank Chinese Taipei 3-0

HORSENS, 1 MAY

Lakshya Sen saved two match points to beat world No. 6, Chou Tien Chen. Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty added a gritty doubles win, before Ayush Shetty delivered the final blow as India registered a commanding 3-0 victory over Chinese Taipei to storm into the semifinals of the Thomas Cup Finals on Friday. Lakshya, who kept on trailing for the better part of the contest, showed remarkable resilience to script an 18-21, 22-20, 21-17 victory in a marathon clash lasting one hour and 28 minutes. World No. 4 Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, the Asian Games champions, then defeated Chiu Hsiang Chieh and Wang Chi-Lin 23-21, 19-21, 21-12 in an hour and 15 minutes to put India in a commanding position. The onus then shifted to Ayush Shetty, and the youngster delivered. The 20-year-old, who recently reached the final of the Badminton Asia Championships, produced a breathtaking display, blending disciplined defence with attacking flair to notch up a 21-16, 21-17 win over world No. 8 and reigning All England Open Badminton Championships champion Lin Chun-Yi in the second singles to seal the contest. "This is not just a win to celebrate it's a performance to remember. One that reflects belief, preparation, and the growing strength of Indian badminton," former India coach Vimal Kumar said. India, the 2022 champions, will face either France or Japan in the semifinals. The victory also assured India a medal in the prestigious Thomas Cup Finals, regarded as the World Men's Team Championships. —*PTI*

Alysha suspended for missing doping tests

SUZHOU, 1 MAY

Olympic bronze medallist pole vaulter Alysha Newman has been suspended for 20 months for whereabouts failures in relation to anti-doping testing, the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) announced on Friday.

"The AIU has banned Alysha Newman (Canada) for 20 months from 3 December 2025 for Whereabouts Failures. DQ results from 23 August 2025," the anti-doping body posted on social media.The 31-year-old Canadian, who won bronze in the pole vault at the Paris Games, had been provisionally suspended on February 3 for three whereabouts failures over 12 months on 27 February, 2025, and on 17 and 23 August of the same year. —*PTI*

Young Tigresses ready for U-17 AC

SUZHOU, 1 MAY

India will face formidable Australia in their opening group match of the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup football tournament here on Saturday.

It will be India's first appearance at the U17 Women's Asian Cup since 2005, marking the end of a 21-year wait at this level.

More significantly, it completes a rare and historic sequence in 2026 as it is India's third women's Asian Cup appearance, following the senior team and the U-20 side.

India will face formidable Australia in their opening group match -*AIFF*

Australia is one of the established football countries in Asia, and they have reached the semifinals of the tournament on two previous occasions.

They will be looking to take one of the four sports for the 2016 FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup in Morocco.

But, underdogs India have nothing to lose against their more fancied opponents in the Group B match. —*PTI*

SL youth cricketers who filmed women in hotel get bail

COLOMBO, 1 MAY

Two members of the Sri Lanka men's under-19 cricket squad have been bailed following their arrest for allegedly filming women hotel guests while showering, a board official said on Friday.

Sri Lanka Cricket has launched its own investigation into the alleged incident, which was reported on Wednesday at a hotel in the capital Colombo, where the team was staying during practice sessions ahead of a local tournament. "We are looking into this while the police investigation and court proceedings are ongoing," a board official told AFP.

The two players who have not been named appeared before a magistrate on Thursday and were released on bail. —*PTI*

Salah 'deserves a big send-off', says Liverpool boss Slot

CAIRO, 1 MAY

Arne Slot said Mohamed Salah "deserves a big send-off" as he confirmed he expected the departing superstar to return from injury before the end of the season.

The Egypt forward, who will leave Anfield at the end of the campaign, was forced off in last weekend's 3-1 win at home to Crystal Palace, prompting fears he may have played his final game for the Reds.

Salah applauded the fans and was given a standing ovation as he made his way off the pitch.

Liverpool confirmed on Wednesday that Salah, 33, had suffered a "minor muscle injury" and was expected to be able to return to action before the campaign comes to an end.

The club travels to face Manchester United on Sunday after three straight wins put it firmly on course for a place in next season's Champions League.

"We expect him to be back in the final part of the season, but not for Sunday," Liverpool boss Slot said at his pre-match press conference on Friday.

"It's a big relief that his injury is minor, so that he's able to play for us, that he's able to play at the World Cup. "And if there's ever a player who deserves to get a big send-off, it's definitely Mo." Salah has scored 257 goals in 440 appearances since his arrival at Anfield in 2017, behind only Ian Rush and Roger Hunt in Liverpool's list of leading goalscorers. He had a public spat with Slot in December, declaring he had "no relationship" with the Dutchman after being dropped for three consecutive games.

But the Liverpool manager later said he had "no issue to resolve" with the forward returning to the fold. —*PTI*

EUROPA LEAGUE SEMIFINAL 1ST LEG

Wood's penalty gives Forest a 1-0 win over Villa

NOTTINGHAM, 1 MAY

Chris Wood scored from the penalty spot to give Nottingham Forest a 1-0 victory over Aston Villa in the first leg of their all-English Europa League semifinal.

In a matchup of two teams hoping to revive former European glory, the win at the City Ground puts Forest a step closer to what would be its first continental competition final in 46 years.

Wood fired his 71st-minute penalty high into the net, giving goalkeeper Emiliano Martínez no chance to save after defender Lucas Digne was whistled for handball.

"It's nice to have the advantage, but going to Villa Park will be a tough game," the New Zealand striker told TNT Sports. "But we've done the job here at home, and now hopefully we'll build into next week."

Vítor Pereira's team stretched its unbeaten run to nine games in all competitions. Forest visits Chelsea in the Premier League on Monday before the second-leg semifinal in Birmingham next Thursday.

Forest is in a relegation fight, currently five points above the Premier League drop zone. The winner of the Europa League title earns a spot in next season's Champions League. That could create a scenario in which Forest gets relegated to England's second division but also plays in Europe's top club competition.

Forest has returned to Europe after 30 years to reach its fourth semifinal, but first since the 1984 UEFA Cup. That was after Forest dominated the European Cup, the predecessor of the Champions League, and won the trophy in 1979 and 1980. Villa became the European champion two years later.

Villa sits fifth in the Premier League and stands a good chance of qualifying for the Champions League domestically. —*PTI*

Akash unlikely to be fit for Afghanistan series

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

India's premier fast bowlers Akash Deep and Harshit Rana are unlikely to be fit for the upcoming home series against Afghanistan and the white-ball tour of the United Kingdom as they are still some time away from getting fully match-fit, sources in BCCI said on Friday.

Akash Deep is currently rehabilitating from a back injury, while Rana had undergone knee surgery after a ligament tear just days before the start of the T20 World Cup in India.

The duo, contracted with the Kolkata Knight Riders, has already missed playing in the ongoing Indian Premier League. "Akash and Harshit's rehabilitation is on track, but there is still a long way to go before they can be released to play matches. If we are talking about Afghanistan and the UK tour, there is no chance of both of them getting fit before that.Akash Deep is seen more as a red-ball prospect, while Rana is very much in the scheme of things in the ODI and T20I formats.—*PTI*